the weekly Standard

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A REPORT FROM STRICKEN NEW ORLEANS
MATT LABASH

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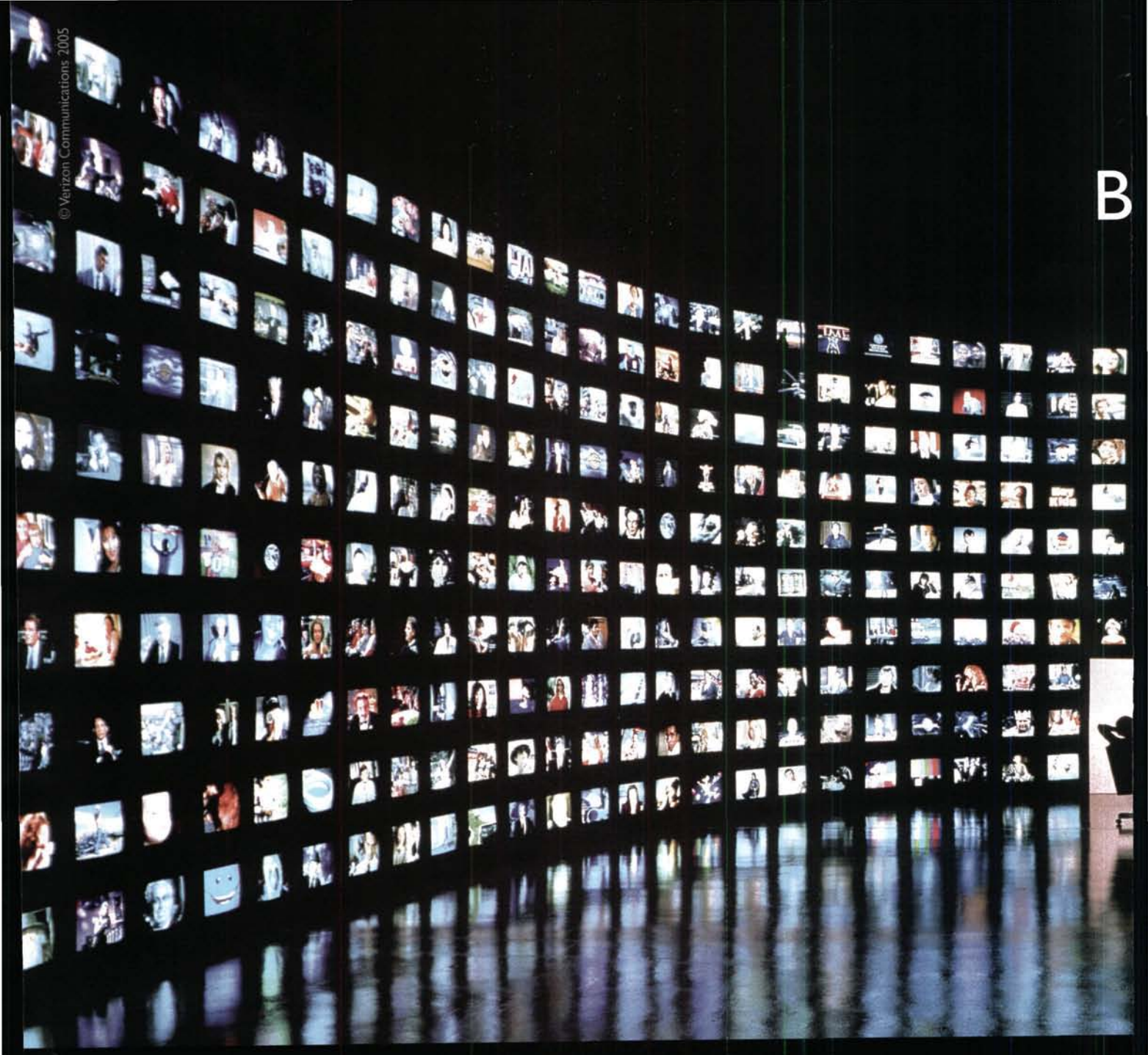

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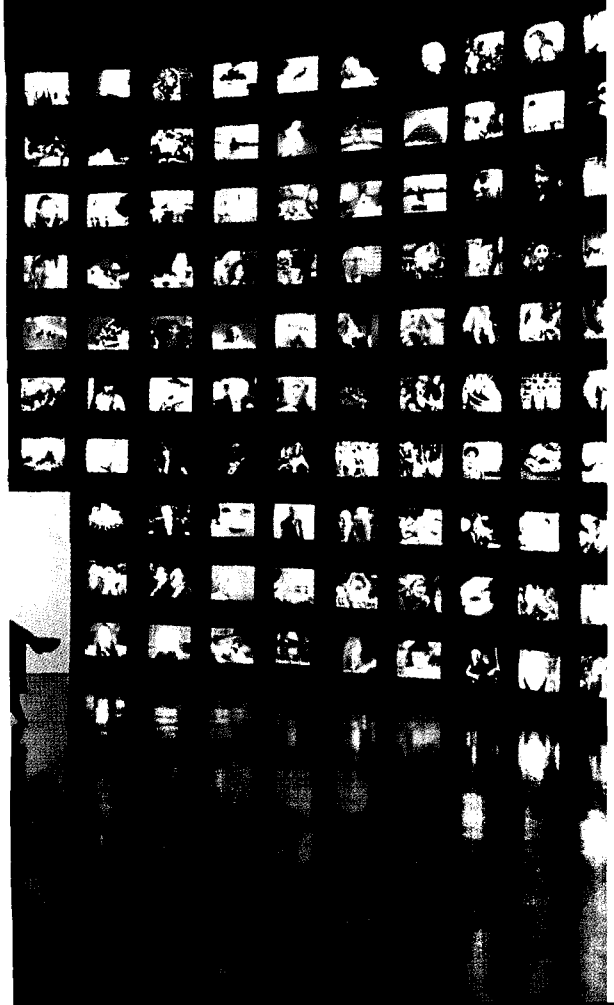

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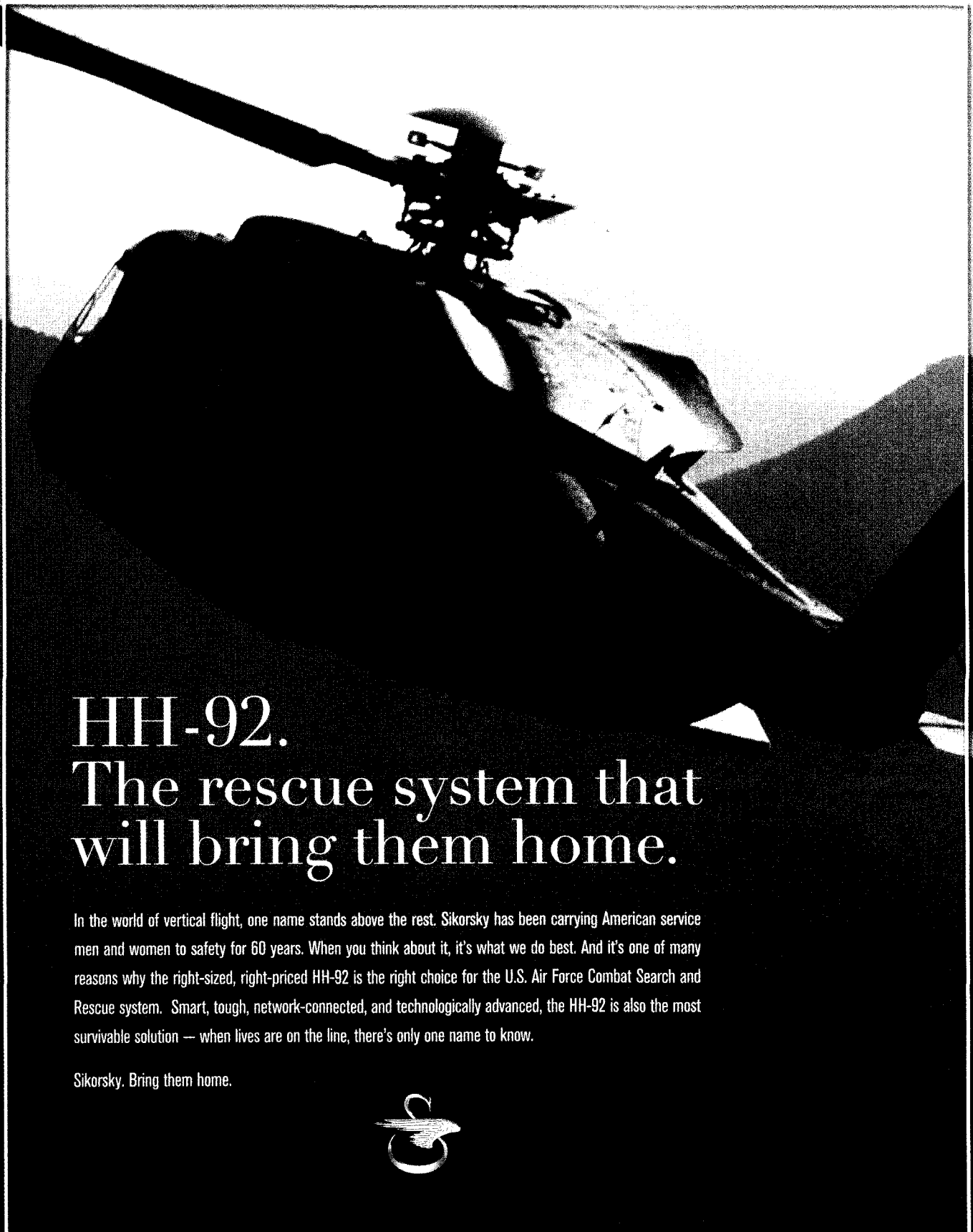

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A-Mentoring We Will Go

Eager as we always are to lend encouragement and friendly, practical advice to young people just beginning their careers in professional journalism, THE SCRAPBOOK is pleased this week to congratulate Miss Sanhita Sen—who probably isn't even 21 years old yet, but who's nevertheless just scored a series of summertime bylines in the *Chicago Tribune* and, most recently, in the *Washington Post*, which ran a long, freelance "special" by Sen in its August 30 hard-news A Section. We're impressed!

And now for some of that friendly, practical advice we mentioned.

Sen's *Post* story ("Law Targets Student Aid for Drug Crimes; Provision Rescinding Financial Packages Criticized for Affecting Only Non-Affluent") was about Clinton-era legislation that limits the eligibility of certain drug offenders for federal student grants and loans. It featured the affecting story of one Yakov Kronrod, a straight-A, prizewinning graduate student who nevertheless lost his federal loans and had to quit school after being "caught" with drugs and convicted of "possessing and selling" the stuff—even though he "denied the distribution charge." Underscoring the apparent inequities of the case, Sen's article went on to describe, by contrast, a "recent Princeton University graduate" who'd twice been caught with marijuana during college but "faced only probation as a result," along with "another recent Princeton graduate" who'd "never faced serious consequences" of any kind despite being "caught with drugs" that he'd been selling on campus "to more than a dozen customers a week, netting $500 to $1,000."

So far, so good.

Couple things, though:

(1) Next time out Sen will probably want to run a quick Nexis check on any fellow like Yakov Kronrod, who may have "denied the distribution charge" to her, but seems to have pleaded guilty to it before a judge, and for reasons that should become abundantly clear from the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette*'s October 29, 2002, account of his arrest:

> Police Chief Loring Barrett Jr. said the officer found several pounds of marijuana, cocaine, mushrooms, Viacodin and Ecstasy . . . in the car. The value of the drugs was almost $8,000, according to an estimate by police. Along with the drugs, police found several hundred dollars in cash. . . . After the search of the car, driver Yakov Kronrod, 21, of 8 Claremont St., Worcester, was charged with speeding, possession of marijuana with intent to distribute, possession of cocaine with intent to distribute, possession of Ecstasy with intent to distribute and two counts of possession of a class E substance (Viacodin) with intent to distribute. *The drug charges were all subsequent offenses, which means they are offenses Mr. Kronrod has been charged with in the past.* [Emphasis added.]

(2) Next time out Sen will also want to take care that she hasn't "buried the lede," as we say in the biz, and as seems to have been the case here. Federal student aid regulations? Who cares, under the circumstances? If we understand her correctly, Sen appears to be reporting that you can get caught running a multi-thousand-dollar drug-dealing operation out of your dorm room at Princeton and even that isn't enough to get you expelled from the place. Holy cow! ♦

Mama Tried . . .

. . . but in the end, the problem proved hopeless: Tragically, Mrs. Dershowitz's little boy, Alan, would grow up with a severe—and apparently irreversible—personality disorder:

> My mother always told me that when a person dies, one should not say anything bad about him. My mother was wrong. . . . Let's begin at the beginning. Rehnquist bragged about being first in his class at Stanford Law School. Today Stanford is a great law school with a diverse student body, but in the late 1940s and early 1950s, it discriminated against Jews and other minorities, both in the admission of students and in the selection of faculty. Justice Stephen Breyer recalled an earlier period of Stanford's history: "When my father was at Stanford, he could not join any of the social organizations because he was Jewish, and those organizations, at that time, did not accept Jews." Rehnquist not only benefited in his class ranking from this discrimination; he was also part of that bigotry. When he was nominated to be an associate justice in 1971, I learned from several sources who had known him as a student that he had outraged Jewish classmates by goose-stepping and heil-Hitlering with brown-shirted friends in front of a dormitory that housed the school's few Jewish students.
>
> —*Alan Dershowitz, blogging on "The Huffington Post," September 4*

The Chief Justice was a brave, intelligent man deeply committed to maintaining the rule of law and preserving an independent judiciary. He understood the Court and its history. He administered the Court, as he did the judicial system, effectively and with great fairness. He never allowed disagreements about the law to become personal and the Court followed his example. I much admired his

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personal and legal strength. I shall greatly miss him.

—Justice Stephen Breyer himself, in a formal statement released the same day

I think the Chief bet he could live out another term despite his illness. He lost that bet, as did all of us, but he won all the prizes for a life well-lived. We love you, William Hubbs Rehnquist.

—Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, eulogizing her Stanford classmate September 7

The *New York Times* Strikes Again

On August 31, the *New York Times* ran an op-ed by Francis Fukuyama. And although the point of this item is about the *Times*, it's worth saying up front that this wasn't THE SCRAPBOOK's favorite effort by Fukuyama.

Fukuyama criticizes the Bush administration for unwisely choosing to go to war in Iraq. This is surprising, since Fukuyama himself once urged just such a course of action, cosigning letters circulated by the Project for the New American Century calling for the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime, by force if necessary, on no less than three occasions: January 26, 1998; May 29, 1998; and September 20, 2001.

But far more surprising was the *Times*'s astonishing misrepresentation of Fukuyama's views. For the *Times* graced his op-ed with an incendiary "pull quote"—a quotation in larger type set off in a box in the middle of his article—that read in its entirety: "President Bush's strategy on Iraq is un-American."

Striking. Fukuyama, however, neither used the word *un-American* nor wrote anything that could be appropriately summarized that way. The closest he came was in arguing that "neither American political culture nor any underlying domestic pressures or constraints have determined the key decisions in American foreign policy since Sept. 11."

The Times has yet to apologize to Fukuyama or to its readers. You might say that its strategy on editing is unprofessional. ♦

Fine By Us

On April 1, you may recall, former Clinton national security adviser Samuel R. Berger pleaded guilty to stealing classified documents from the National Archives on two occasions in 2003. Berger had been tasked by his old boss to review Clinton administration counterterrorism documents in preparation for testimony before the 9/11 Commission. He did that—and more. He lifted five of the documents from the Archives, took a pair of scissors to three of those, and then lied about the whole thing.

Justice Department prosecutors accepted Berger's plea. They asked D.C. magistrate Deborah Robinson to fine Berger $10,000 and take away his security clearance for three years. But Robinson disagreed. At sentencing last Thursday, she upped the fine to $50,000, gave Berger two years' probation, and ordered him to perform 100 hours of community service. This sentence—not the milquetoast Justice Department recommendation—"sufficiently reflect[s] the seriousness of the offense," Robinson said. ♦

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Casual

IN THE BEGINNING . . .

I take credit for the creation of THE WEEKLY STANDARD—but only a portion of the credit. My cofounders, Bill Kristol and John Podhoretz, deserve more. In any case, it wasn't exactly the brainstorm of the century to start a weekly conservative magazine on politics and policy (and a lot more on culture than I expected) in the news capital of the world, Washington, D.C.

Almost from the moment I joined the *New Republic* in 1985 to write about the White House and politics, I realized that something was missing in Washington journalism. Ronald Reagan's White House, the most conservative of the 20th century, eagerly awaited the delivery of 30 copies of *TNR* each Thursday morning. True, that magazine was less liberal in those days, Charles Krauthammer being its star writer, but the Reagan crowd read it. I got feedback and access, even an off-the-record lunch with the Gipper himself. He was a clever and disciplined politician. He knew that nothing was really off the record in Washington. Anyway, the thought occurred to me that if the *New Republic* was the only timely opinion magazine for the Reagan White House to read, there surely was more than enough room for a conservative alternative.

Jump to 1994. Led by Newt Gingrich, Republicans won an election that gave the party the House, Senate, and a majority of governorships. It was a smashing breakthrough for conservatives, more sweeping than Reagan's triumph in 1980. The question was whether a conservative era had begun, or just a moment. Either way, the 1994 victory, coupled with the conservative media vacuum in Washington, was sufficient to justify a new magazine that would both reflect and influence the political mood.

The first meeting was at the Jefferson Hotel in January 1995. I was there along with Kristol, Podhoretz, Andy Ferguson, then writing for *Washingtonian*, and David Tell. I was ready to leave *TNR* and Podhoretz was willing to give up his job as TV critic for the *New York Post*. Kristol was running the wildly successful Project for the Republican Future, which had almost singlehandedly destroyed the Clinton health care plan. Tell was Kristol's No. 2 at PRF. Kristol had other options, particularly the prospect of becoming a major strategist for Phil

Gramm's presidential campaign. (I contend THE STANDARD saved Bill from the nightmare of the Gramm campaign.) At the meeting and in subsequent chats, we decided to go ahead with the magazine scheme. We had everything but a sponsor.

As luck would have it, Kristol knew Rupert Murdoch thanks to a mutual friend, Irwin Stelzer. So when Murdoch dropped by Kristol's office a few weeks later, Kristol popped the question. Would he be interested in funding a new conservative magazine? Yes, he said. To lock up the deal, Kristol, Podhoretz, Tell, and I met over dinner with Murdoch in March 1995 at his home in Beverly Hills. Thanks to Murdoch's generosity, THE STANDARD was born a couple of months later.

The first priority was a name. *The American Standard* might have worked if it weren't better known as the name of a firm that manufactures toilets. I think it was Podhoretz who suggested simply *The Standard*, but that name had been taken by one or more small publications we came upon when doing a trademark search through magazine titles. So we settled on THE WEEKLY STANDARD. (Despite the name, I'm frequently asked, "How often does your magazine come out?")

The next step was acquiring a staff. Richard Starr came from the Hudson Institute in Indianapolis. Claudia Winkler departed Scripps Howard to join. David Brooks left his job as op-ed page editor at the *Wall Street Journal*. Chris Caldwell arrived from the *American Spectator*. Tucker Carlson was writing a book for the Heritage Foundation when he signed up. I called an ex-intern of mine at *TNR*, Matt Rees, who was working for the *Wall Street Journal* in Brussels. I had never heard of Matt Labash, but Podhoretz had and wisely insisted on hiring him. Jay Nordlinger, now at *National Review*, showed such brilliance as a freelance proofreader of the first issue that he was brought on board as an editor the following week.

That first issue was published the Monday after Labor Day 1995. I suspect if you examine it, you'll have a couple questions, like whatever happened to President Powell. Notice the headline ends with a question mark. That, in the secret code of journalism, means the answer is invariably going to be no, as it was in this case.

And what about "Permanent Offense"? I'll have to take the rap for that. I picked up the phrase and the idea behind it from Gingrich and used it in the cover story. It was catchy. It was forward-looking. It never happened. There's a lesson here about the difference between politics and journalism. Gingrich is long gone as the leader of congressional Republicans. THE WEEKLY STANDARD lives on, 10 years old with this issue.

FRED BARNES

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the weekly Standard

The First Ten Years

When we launched THE WEEKLY STANDARD 10 years ago, I didn't know what I was doing. I'd never actually worked on a magazine before. But I'd grown up watching my father edit a couple of them. I'd *read* lots of magazines. I had a great many friends in the business. What's the problem, I figured? How hard can this be?

Today, almost 500 WEEKLY STANDARD issues later, it's long since become clear to me how comically naive this must then have seemed to any number of interested observers—including to my experienced colleagues who, thankfully, did know what they were doing (and still do). But back in September 1995, I had high-falutin' hopes. I thought we'd carefully plan each issue of the magazine, ensuring an ideal balance of subject matter—between the topical and the longer-range, between politics and arts, between foreign and domestic policy.

Don't get me wrong: We *have* tried to do that. On balance, over time, I rather think we've succeeded, in fact. But the day-to-day reality of opinion journalism, up close, doesn't look nearly so serene or neat.

Among the most important lessons I've learned, blindingly obvious though it might at first appear, is one I think applies with equal force not just to Washington journalists but also to the people we write about—and to our readers. It concerns a central, chronic misunderstanding of modern political life. Let's call it "the fallacy of hidden design."

Men and women in public life are nowadays constantly confronted—much to their exasperation, as I recall from my own past life in government—by reporters who have trouble believing in the possibility of a news story whose deepest meaning isn't in some sense a secret. It cannot be, so these reporters suppose, that the president has made his most recent pronouncement or decision simply because he thought it, on balance, the right and timely thing to do. At least it cannot mostly be that. There must also be some strategy afoot—probably a cynical or selfish one related to some interest group, polling demographic, or whatnot.

But the president's aides would tell you—correctly, in my experience—that top-level, behind-the-scenes Washington doesn't actually work like this. It can't: People are too busy, there are too many competing agendas to juggle, there's not enough time, in-boxes and calendars are too full, and five big things still have to get done by 6 o'clock whether you've perfected them or not. Under the circumstances, then, the best and much the safest thing a politician can usually hope to do is play it straight, with minimal calculation. Generally speaking, the clearest and most reliable expressions of a public figure's intentions are his own words and deeds. Put another way: The most accurate and intelligent interpretation of the news tends to be the one that best concentrates its attention not on some imagined, backstage Wizard of Oz, but on what's happening in front of the curtain, for all to see and hear.

And as I've discovered these past 10 years, it turns out that much the same is true where interpretations of the news media are concerned. A magazine editor gets mugged by that reality on a regular basis. Certain articles you've commissioned never materialize. Others show up but prove to be unusable. Halfway through the week, some unexpected occurrence in the world will inspire one of your writers to dash off a dazzling, must-publish piece, and all of a sudden, the "ideal balance of subject matter" becomes an unobtainable mirage. You're left, instead, with five different articles—each of which is a good, strong, just-right-for-THE WEEKLY STANDARD piece, but all of which happen also to be about, say, developments in the Middle East.

There's no avoiding it sometimes. And, while I'd hardly make a claim for it as a landmark insight into human nature—life is messy; problems and opportunities pop up out of the blue; all you can do is try your hardest; often there is *less* on view than meets the eye—the fact remains, I think, that surprisingly few people seem able to remember these truths. It was more common in the magazine's first few years, I suppose, but it still happens all the time: Some not insignificant number of people always assume that THE WEEKLY STANDARD isn't really published in English, but

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in code—that its contents are designed to advance a surreptitious political agenda.

THE WEEKLY STANDARD is a conservative magazine, of course. We make no bones about it. And ours tends toward a particular kind of conservatism; our pages are its home, we like to think. But that's the point: The distinctive point of view in question has been worked out—and is still being worked out—on paper, in public, over the long haul. And it's also the case that in these very same pages we have routinely run authors who manifestly don't agree with one another. I often get asked: "Why are you printing this particular argument about that particular subject at this particular time?" And just as often the honest answer is that someone's recently offered us the article in question and we've decided we like it. Simple as that. Sometimes a magazine is really just a magazine.

And sometimes a magazine about the news is *driven* by the news. Much that's happened at THE WEEKLY STANDARD we never—and probably couldn't have—expected. On Labor Day 1995, when we were just getting underway, Washington's "Gingrich Revolution" was still in full swing. Already in our first issue we were spotting weaknesses in the speaker and his footsoldiers. But overall, we were fairly enthusiastic about them, just the same, and the cover of that premiere issue carried a picture of Newt Gingrich as a martial, confident Tarzan—under the soon-to-be-laughable headline "Permanent Offense."

Two months later, history will record, Gingrich and the congressional Republicans were on permanent *defense*, having alienated the country with an ill-conceived government shutdown. And a few weeks after that, President Clinton decided (belatedly in our view) to launch a military intervention in Bosnia. One of our contributing editors, Charles Krauthammer, thought and wrote that Clinton was wrong to do so. But the magazine editorially supported the president, in that same issue and subsequently—for which sin a not-insignificant chunk of our original subscribers immediately canceled out on us.

So it has gone over the subsequent weeks and months and years. Once upon a time, I see from an early cover article, we apparently believed it possible to "Smash the Internet!" Oops. One of us, who shall remain nameless, argued in late 1995 that Colin Powell might make a fine president. Some of us thought the Republicans should nominate John McCain in 2000; others of us thought the McCain idea was nuts. And in each of these and dozens of other instances, lots of readers got irked with us. Early in the magazine's history, I remember mentioning to a friend that I seemed to have made more enemies in one year at THE WEEKLY STANDARD than I had during my previous 10 years in government and politics combined.

Then came 9/11, the ultimate in unexpected developments. Not everyone was taken entirely by surprise, it's important to note—and here I would refer you to "A Cowering Superpower," an eerily prescient Reuel Marc Gerecht essay on Osama bin Laden that ran in our July 30, 2001, issue. But I think it fair to say, at the very least, that before the fact of 9/11, my colleagues and I would never have anticipated that THE WEEKLY STANDARD's pages were soon to be so thoroughly and persistently dominated by coverage of a global-scale war on Middle Eastern terrorism and despotism. And since 9/11, I don't suppose any of us would think we had much serious choice in the matter.

Which ultimately speaks—if I may be forgiven a pseudo-Platonic moment—to the *weekliness* of weekly journalism. A weekly comes out every week. A weekly *has* to come out every week.

Early on, back in the "Permanent Offense" days, I remember lamenting aloud at an editorial meeting that there was one article in the otherwise terrific issue we'd shortly be printing that was okay, but wasn't really at the highest level of quality. Fred Barnes immediately set me straight about this. Perhaps it wasn't the best imaginable piece of writing, Fred said of the essay in question. But the best imaginable piece of writing, in this case, did not exist, he pointed out. And the piece we had in hand, by contrast, possessed what Fred considered among the most important journalistic qualities: "the quality of doneness."

Here's to 10 years of doneness!

—*William Kristol*

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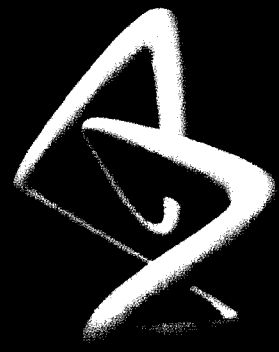

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Farewell to the Chief

William H. Rehnquist, 1924-2005.

BY TERRY EASTLAND

IN *THE FEDERALIST*, James Madison observed that judges are "shoots from the executive stock." With this phrase, Madison was making a point about where, in a government of separated powers, judges come from; and of course, the answer is the executive, since the Constitution plainly sets forth that it is the president who has the authority to select judges.

True, the Senate must approve a president's nominees, or else none can have life tenure. But the constitutional structure is such that no one can become a judge unless the president chooses the person. Judges are shoots from the executive stock *only*, and so it is that a president can try, through his "shoots," to alter the jurisprudential direction of the courts—the Supreme Court included.

This point compels our attention as President Bush moves to fill two seats on the Court, the ones held by the late Chief Justice William Rehnquist and Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. Bush hasn't had a vacancy on his lengthening watch until now, but he has consistently stated his intention to appoint to the Court (and the courts below) judicial conservatives, citing Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas as examples of the kind of jurists he admires. Bush isn't the only president in the modern era to make that kind of promise. Richard Nixon was the first to do so, and then came Ronald Reagan, followed by Bush's father, George H.W. Bush.

As this list of GOP presidents suggests, the Republican party has, for four decades, been the party of judicial conservatism, rhetorically at least. But of the nine justices these Republican presidents appointed—ten if you include John Paul Stevens, named by the fourth GOP president during that period, the caretaker Gerald Ford—only three can fairly be described, without substantial qualification, as judicial conservatives. They are Scalia, Thomas, and Rehnquist, the nation's 16th chief justice, who, stricken with thyroid cancer, died on September 3.

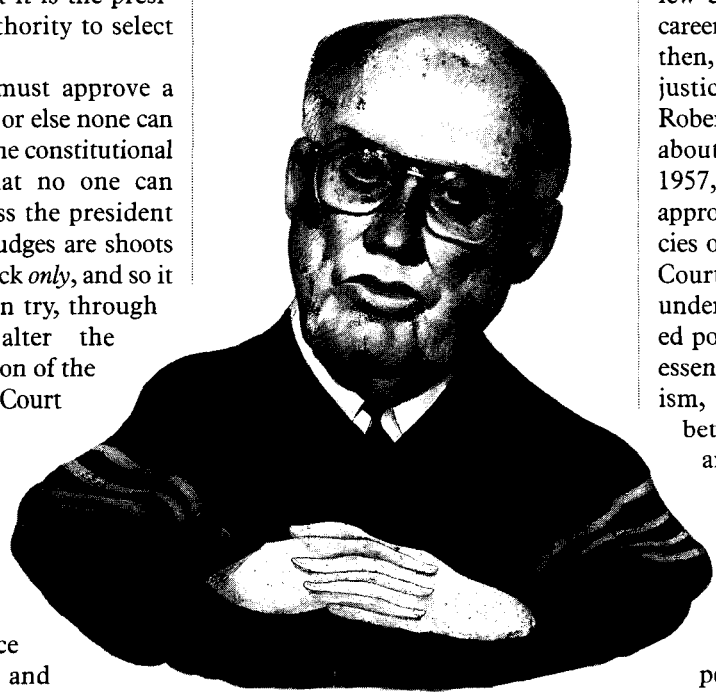

Illustration by Earl Keleny

Rehnquist was one of four justices Richard Nixon appointed from 1969 to 1971. In his 1968 campaign for the presidency Nixon sharply criticized the Warren Court, especially its criminal-law decisions, and called for the appointment of "strict constructionists" who would interpret the law and not see themselves as "superlegislators with a free hand to impose their social and political viewpoints upon the American people." But among his appointees, only the redoubtable Rehnquist proved unambiguously conservative, and one—Harry Blackmun, author of the Court's opinion in *Roe* v. *Wade*—compiled a record celebrated by liberals.

Rehnquist stands out in many ways, most notably for a judicial philosophy that he brought to the Court fully developed, and adhered to with few exceptions throughout his long career, first as an associate justice and then, from 1986 to 2005, as the chief justice. Having clerked for Justice Robert Jackson, and written critically about the Supreme Court as early as 1957, Rehnquist formulated his approach to judging against the legacies of the New Deal and the Warren Court. The federal government was understood to have virtually unlimited power, with the states functioning essentially as subdivisions. Federalism, the distribution of power between the national government and the states that the Framers understood as a protection for liberty, had ceased to be a vital principle. The courts themselves were regarded as possessing authority to improve on the legislative choices of the people by divining and enforcing rights not found in the text or history of the Constitution.

Rehnquist's tenure was effectively a dissent from those understandings. He made his views known early on. In 1976, writing for a five-justice majority in *National League of Cities* v. *Usery*, Rehnquist found that a 1974 law extending provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act to state and municipal employees interfered with state sovereignty and thus violated the Tenth Amendment, dormant since the New Deal. Three years earlier, in

Terry Eastland is publisher of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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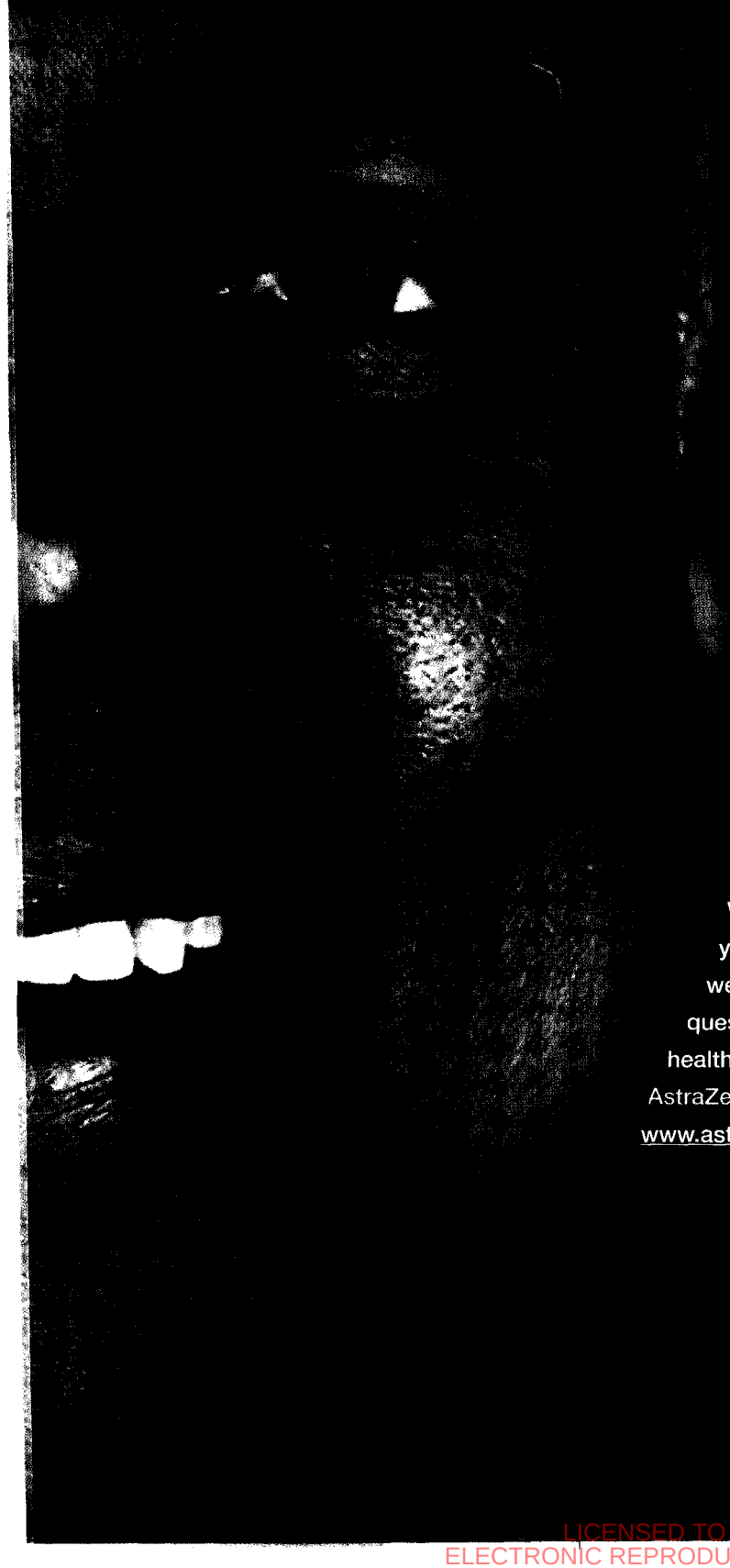

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Roe v. *Wade*, when the Burger Court built on Warren Court precedents by declaring a constitutional right to abortion, a dissenting Rehnquist wrote that the majority had not followed the intent of the Constitution but engaged in "judicial legislation."

In 1976, Rehnquist wrote an article in the *Texas Law Review* titled "The Notion of a Living Constitution." Contending against the idea that "nonelected members of the federal judiciary may address themselves to a social problem simply because other branches of government have failed or refused to do so," Rehnquist articulated the essence of his jurisprudence: That "the people are the ultimate source of authority," that they have parceled that authority out in various ways to create a structure for self-governance that also protects individual rights, and that the job of the courts is to make sure that the federal government doesn't overstep its authority, nor that any government violates rights the people have established through law.

Rehnquist's judicial conservatism was grounded in democratic self-government and placed a premium on federalism. It is one kind of judicial conservatism; there are others. Scalia describes himself as an "originalist," meaning he would defer to a text in terms of its objective meaning at the time of its enactment. Thomas is also an originalist, but takes a natural-law approach in discerning the meaning of the Constitution.

There are other differences between Scalia and Thomas, not least that of whether to adhere to original meaning when doing so would lead to rulings sharply at odds with the Court's precedents. Scalia would not always so adhere and has called himself a "faint-hearted originalist," while Thomas seems quite willing to follow his arguments where they may lead. He has maintained, for example, that interstate commerce, which Congress has authority to regulate, should be understood to extend only to transactions that actually cross state lines, a view that, were the Court to accept, would certainly clip the wings of the modern Congress.

Notwithstanding such differences among these three judicial conservatives, they held enough in common to produce agreement on most issues. For example, in *Planned Parenthood* v. *Casey* (1992), Rehnquist, Scalia, and Thomas were equally prepared to overrule *Roe*.

Defenders of the New Deal and Warren Courts thought that the Burger Court, being stocked with four shoots from the Nixon executive, might pose a serious threat to its precedents. But the Burger Court gave us, as the subtitle of one book put it, *The Counter-Revolution That Wasn't*. Rehnquist didn't have enough allies to effect the counterrevolution. With the Reagan and then the Bush I presidency, he was given allies—but not as many as it first appeared, and not enough to effect substantial change in key areas.

Rehnquist saw his own federalism opinion in *National League of Cities* repudiated nine years later in the *Garcia* case, and the Court's more recent efforts to revive federalism—for example, the series of commerce-clause decisions that Rehnquist inaugurated with his opinion for the Court in a 1995 case—may have foundered. Meanwhile, the other three Republican-appointed justices—Sandra Day O'Connor, Anthony Kennedy, and David Souter—wrote the joint opinion in *Casey* declining to overrule *Roe* v. *Wade*.

Reagan appointees O'Connor and Kennedy have disappointed everyone hoping they would be judicial conservatives on the order of Rehnquist or Scalia or Thomas. The same is true of Souter, George H.W. Bush's first appointee (Thomas was second). On the other hand, it bears noting that Reagan appointee Kennedy is on the Court only because Democrats, who controlled the Senate at the time, successfully massed against Robert Bork. Had Bork been confirmed, the story of the long-running Republican effort to alter the Court's jurisprudence would have been significantly different. No one doubts that *Roe*, for example, would have been overruled.

So here is George W. Bush, with an opportunity to move the Court to the judicial right. If the experience of the past 40 years teaches that it is possible to pick jurists who turn out to be judicial conservatives, it also teaches that other, less agreeable, factors can influence the selection process. In 1981 Reagan considered a person's sex—he wanted to appoint the first female justice—when he picked O'Connor, who joined Rehnquist in his pro-federalism efforts, but whose approach to judging often resulted in mushy decisions that offered little guidance for future litigants. According to Kenneth Starr's account in *First Among Equals: The Supreme Court in American Life*, had Reagan followed the Justice Department's recommendation, Bork would have been the choice, not O'Connor. (Not incidentally, Republicans controlled the Senate in 1981.)

In choosing John Roberts to succeed Rehnquist, Bush may well have selected a genuine judicial conservative. The question now is whether Bush will pick another judicial conservative to take O'Connor's place, thereby producing a vote shift and a more conservative Court. The temptation will be to seek to preempt opposition from Senate Democrats by subordinating judicial philosophy, and choosing someone on the basis of, say, diversity. Or by choosing someone who has said next to nothing about the great legal issues of the day—such as Souter, who once told a law clerk, "I never had to think about these things until I came to Washington. I never thought about them. I had no settled views."

If Bush devalues judicial philosophy in choosing O'Connor's successor, the project of modern Republican presidents to redirect the Court will stay roughly where it is now, with no important advances. What ought to embolden the president is a number—55. That's the number of Republicans in the Senate, and it should be enough to prevail if Senate Democrats decide to wage a confirmation battle. ♦

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The Politics of Katrina

Partisanship begins at the water's edge.

BY FRED BARNES

NANCY PELOSI, the House Democratic leader, tells a great story about questioning a benighted President Bush on Katrina relief. At a White House meeting last week with congressional leaders, she told Bush he should immediately fire Michael Brown, the head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The president's response, Pelosi says, was to ask: Why? What went wrong? Her conclusion was that Bush was "oblivious, in denial, dangerous."

Others at the meeting tell a slightly different version of the testy encounter, a version that sounds more believable. Yes, Pelosi declared that Brown should go, and Bush asked why. But it's her answer, not Bush's question, that is telling. "Well," she said, then paused. "For everything. . . . It was so slow." Pelosi offered no list of specific things Brown did wrong or failed to do. Bush was appalled. He knew how Brown had performed, wasn't happy with it, and removed him from Katrina duties two days later. Pelosi had merely uncorked the now-familiar blanket accusation at Brown. Bush responded sarcastically. "Thank you for your advice," he said.

A lot was packed into that brief exchange. It displayed the deep polarization in American politics that has shaped nearly everyone's take on Katrina. It showed the eagerness of Democrats to exploit the hurricane and its aftermath for maximum political gain. And it reflected Bush's failure to seize the opportunity of Katrina for strong presidential leadership.

A good question is why the president, slammed mercilessly by the mainstream press, Democrats, and a few Republicans for the Katrina disaster, hasn't been blamed by the public for ineptitude in responding to the plight of New Orleans. The answer is more obvious than you might think. First and foremost, the elite media simply don't have the clout they used to. "The broadcast networks in particular don't have the ability to dominate the story anymore," says Republican consultant Jeffrey Bell. Millions of Americans "didn't take at face value that Bush had bungled. They didn't believe it." Nor should they have.

Also, the red state/blue state division in the country proved durable. Make that rock-solid. Democrats and independents didn't change their view of Bush's presidency. More significantly, neither did Republicans or conservatives. Those in the Republican coalition mostly agree with Bush on Iraq, terrorism, taxes, and social issues. Balanced against their reasons for supporting Bush, his handling of Katrina was nowhere near enough to turn them against him. In polls, the worst Bush suffered was a slight dip in his job-approval rating.

In trashing the president, Democrats have overplayed their hand as never before. Their criticism of Bush began soon after the levees broke in New Orleans and picked up steam once it became clear that thousands of people were stranded in New Orleans without food, medicine, or imminent prospects of being rescued. And the media, more hostile to Bush than ever, adopted the Democratic line that the slowness of rescue and recovery efforts was the fault of Bush and Brown.

Now, after politicizing Katrina and dividing the country, Democrats insist, disingenuously, that Bush depoliticize the issue and unify the country. He should go about this, Democrats argue, by choosing a "unity" nominee for the second Supreme Court vacancy. Unity in this case means a candidate Democrats like. And he should jettison his domestic agenda, especially tax cuts. If Bush falls for this, he deserves to have his job rating drop. (I suspect he won't.)

There's a good test of whether criticism of Bush is purely partisan: If the accuser also directs blame at Louisiana governor Kathleen Blanco, who froze in reaction to Katrina, and New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin, so overwhelmed by the hurricane that he didn't carry out the city's emergency plan, then the criticism might have some merit. Another test is whether a critic cites real examples where FEMA failed to carry out one of its missions. Rescuing people from roofs isn't one of them. Most critics, like Pelosi, fail to offer any specifics.

On the other hand, despite Bush's initial public defense of Brown, I haven't heard anyone at the White House express satisfaction with him or his performance when speaking off the record. And as the symbol of an inadequate response, he was an albatross at the White House. One aide said that FEMA's failure to deal with—or know about—the chaos and mayhem at the convention center in New Orleans was a clear "breakdown."

Another Bush aide, seeking to absolve the president, said Brown should have alerted him to how bad conditions in New Orleans and how pathetic the actions of the mayor and governor were. Speaking of Blanco, she needs to clear up the biggest remaining Katrina mystery:

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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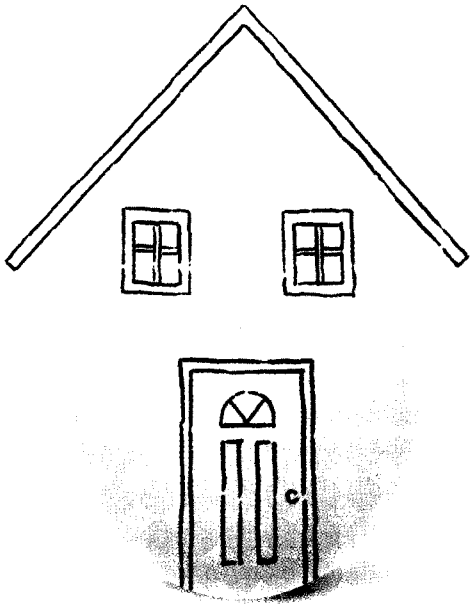

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Where were the 6,000-plus Louisiana National Guard troops? They were a minimal presence in New Orleans for most of the week after the hurricane.

What about Bush? His performance lacked three things we saw in 9/11. By the evening of 9/11, he understood the magnitude and meaning of the attacks and told aides, including Vice President Cheney, that America was at war. The night the levees broke and indeed the next day, Bush hadn't fully grasped the dimensions of the crisis.

In the nine days after 9/11, the president delivered two powerful speeches, one at the Washington National Cathedral, the other from the Capitol. But there was no major speech in the same time frame after Katrina. And with 9/11, there was what a White House aide calls a galvanizing "bullhorn moment" when Bush showed, while speaking at Ground Zero, that he was fully in charge. "There was never going to be a bullhorn moment" with Katrina, the aide said.

Of course Katrina wasn't as significant as 9/11. America wasn't under attack. And 9/11 changed the political balance, Katrina didn't. But there was a parallel in Bush's conduct. In 9/11, he stumbled for a day or two, then boldly took command. It was the same with Katrina. In his first trip to the Gulf Coast, he noted that Mississippi senator Trent Lott's house had been destroyed. But Lott would build a "fantastic new house," Bush said, "and I'm looking forward to sitting on the porch." Pointing to Brown, he said, "Brownie, you're doing a heck of a job." The tone and substance were wrong.

But as with 9/11, Bush's second reaction was more confident. Within days of the first visit, Bush returned with stronger words. And back in Washington, he made a promise. "The people who have been hurt by this storm . . . need to know that the government is going to be with you for the long haul," he said.

Bush was in charge again. ♦

When Pointing Fingers . . .

Don't forget Congress.

BY JOHN J. DIIULIO JR.

WEEK BY WEEK in Katrina's wake, Americans and their leaders are in for two deeply painful civics lessons having nothing whatsoever to do with racially conditioned responses or partisan politics. Lesson one is that the only thing worse than having big government in the first place is relying on it to achieve big goals that it cannot, in fact, achieve without additional funding and far-reaching administrative reforms; the only thing worse than spending over two trillion tax dollars annually is having to watch as your big government at each and every level (federal, state, and local) moves too slow and comes up too small in performing such fundamental tasks as maintaining public order, guarding public health, and protecting private property.

Lesson two is that what passes for big government in this country belongs to Congress. Federal agencies report to the president but are Congress's fiscal and administrative creatures. For almost a half-century now, the nation's legislative branch has made federal bureaucracies into a bloody mess. At times such as these, there is, alas, precious little that even a determined president, his White House staff, or his political appointees in the agencies can do to clean up the mess, change how things work, or improve government performance.

Few topics are as boring as administrative history, but none matters more to what government does or fails to do. The moment's critical case in point is the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). In Senate testimony given last March, FEMA director Michael D. Brown stated that the nation "is prepared as never before, to deal quickly and capably with the consequences of disasters and other domestic incidents. However, despite continuing improvements to the domestic incident architecture, planning for a comprehensive and effective response to—and recovery from—a catastrophic incident is still a challenge to the emergency management community."

That was putting it delicately. Founded in 1979, FEMA merged several separate disaster-response agencies. It has been blessed with capable civil servants and is rightly credited with responding well to myriad emergencies and disasters (floods, earthquakes, 9/11, and more). But Congress has kept FEMA on a short and raggedy appropriations and oversight leash. FEMA is not now, and never has been, an agency that has the authority, the budget, and the staff to approximate its ambitious mission statement. When it comes to emergency planning, disaster preparedness, hazard mitigation, and other key responsibilities, the often-heroic FEMA is but the national government's anemic administrative finger in the dike.

FEMA's battle-tested genius is in forging ad hoc cooperation and coordination with whatever other federal, state, or local public agencies or other organizations may be involved in a particular situation. By congressional charter, however, the agency has little real power to get other (often larger)

John J. DiIulio Jr., a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, *is coauthor (with James Q. Wilson) of* American Government: Institutions and Policies *(Houghton-Mifflin Company), now in its tenth edition.*

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government agencies to act (spend money, deploy personnel, provide information) when and as it deems necessary. From a public administration perspective, expecting FEMA to spearhead and sustain a truly effective "emergency management" response to Katrina would be almost as silly as expecting it to coordinate or command State Department and Pentagon efforts to secure, rebuild, and democratize Iraq.

During its first decade, FEMA could do little to tame the hyper-fragmentation that had long plagued major disaster-relief operations (and that was the original justification for its own founding). In the mid-90s, Midwest floods and other disasters sent FEMA reeling. The agency got some needed congressional attention, plus a little extra money, via the Clinton-Gore "reinventing government" initiative. In fiscal year 1998, FEMA asked Congress for $3.2 billion, and got most of what it wanted. In 2000, however, the agency hatched a five-year strategic plan that few experts believed (correctly, as it turned out) it could fulfill. In 2001, under Bush-Cheney, FEMA asked Congress for only $2.1 billion.

Then came 9/11. In 2002, FEMA, closer than ever to political front-burners, asked Congress for $6.4 billion, including $3.5 billion for local police, firefighters, and other "first responders." Congress largely obliged. In May 2002, then-FEMA director Joe M. Allbaugh told Senate appropriators that in "addition to distributing this grant money," FEMA would commence "developing nationwide standards for states and local governments pertaining to first responder training, equipment interoperability, emergency planning, mutual aid, and evaluation." On paper, some progress has been made in developing these "nationwide standards." But, as we have all witnessed, America is hardly the national emergency preparedness paragon promised by every White House and Congress since 1979.

Since 2003, FEMA has been in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). With DHS as its new parent, FEMA joined a bureaucratically dysfunctional extended family. For nine months after 9/11, the White House, led by Office of Homeland Security chief Tom Ridge, argued that no such new department was needed. Meanwhile, congressional Democrats called for a big new "homeland defense" agency. The idea was also championed by key Senate Republicans and finally by many House Republicans. In June 2002, the White House relented and joined this congressional chorus.

When it debuted in March 2003, the DHS encompassed 22 separate agencies, over 170,000 employees, and a roughly $40 billion budget. Within six months, big-city mayors who had cheered the agency's creation charged that the department was not moving federal funds or providing technical assistance as it was supposed to do. Within a year, the department's failure to coordinate critical activities with state and local governments (especially state and local law enforcement and public health agencies), and its distributive-politics-as-usual formulas for allocating grants (less money per capita for high-risk big cities than for low-density rural states) were already staple topics at academic public administration conferences.

In July 2004, the 9/11 Commission's 567-page report politely but pointedly called on the DHS to "go beyond preexisting jobs of the agencies that have been brought together inside" it. To some extent, that has begun to happen. Before Katrina's damage was a week old, the DHS led an effort that put over 15,000 National Guardsmen, over 12,000 U.S. military and Coast Guard personnel, several hundred federal law enforcement officers, and, last but not least, dozens of FEMA response units, on the ground in the affected communities.

But, as most everyone agrees, that effort by the federal government's third biggest bureaucracy was still too little and too late for too many people and too much property. It was also largely indistinguishable from the effort that the White House itself could have rung up and got rolling without any new mega-department. That could mean that the administration was right in doubting that the new department was needed. More likely, however, it means that the 9/11 Commission was right in arguing that the new department, and its subunits like FEMA, needs to be organized far more soundly.

The 9/11 Commission was also dead right when it lamented that needed reforms to DHS and other agencies "will not work if congressional oversight does not change too. Unity of effort in executive management can be lost if it is fractured by divided congressional oversight." Few things "are more difficult to change in Washington than congressional committee jurisdiction and prerogatives." Congress, to its credit, has enacted many of the 9/11 Commission's proposals (some over White House objections), but it has not given the DHS or its subunits, including FEMA, appropriations and oversight that begets "unity of effort."

But the relevant administrative history here predates the DHS and trails back at least to FEMA's birth in 1979. If, at any point over the last three decades, Congress had heeded what so many nonpartisan experts had argued before it, and if it had wanted to build or empower a demonstrably better FEMA, it could have done so. The long and checkered congressional appropriations and oversight record in this case displays no such desire on the part of the agency's Capitol Hill overseers.

The media hounds who have barked at DHS secretary Michael Chertoff and the White House concerning whether Chertoff or other executive branch officials should resign would be more justified in sniffing after the past and present members of Congress, both Democrats and Republicans, who have overseen these agencies, and asking them whether they or members of their staffs should resign or apologize. (A September 8 article on congressional oversight of the Army Corps of Engineers projects in Louisiana by the *Washington Post*'s Michael Grunwald is a model of what

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sophisticated reporting can accomplish in this arena.) Or, what would be far more constructive, the Washington press corps should trouble itself—and also trouble the Congress—to pay close attention to the promising six-point plan for "realigning" the DHS that Chertoff announced just this past July.

Chertoff's detailed plan envisions important organizational changes to almost every part of the sprawling homeland security bureaucracy including refocusing FEMA's 2,600-plus full-time employees on their "historic and vital mission of response and recovery." FEMA's last real administrative tune-up along these lines was undertaken during the Clinton-Gore years by James Lee Witt, who came to the director's job with experience as a state emergency management specialist. Chertoff can make many critical changes to FEMA and other department subunits on his own authority, but any far-reaching changes to the DHS organization chart, and any new funds that will be needed, must be reviewed and approved by Congress.

Still, giving Congress its fair share of the blame, or holding it more strictly accountable than usual for what happens next, is no substitute for leaders at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue facing up to some hard realities. Whether we are talking about putting enough "boots on the ground" in New Orleans or in the new Iraq, we are talking about Congress appropriating money in nine-zero-figure amounts for years to come. Some estimate that attending to Katrina-ravaged lives, properties, and streets will cost at least $100 billion before long. Who pays? Many businesses have pledged millions or reduced or frozen prices on needed goods. Charitable organizations have gone into overdrive. Religious leaders have called on their flocks to take in affected families and donate food, clothes, and money. Universities around the country have mobilized volunteers and matriculated students from hurricane-damaged colleges. And these are just a few of the private efforts.

As always, the charitable impulse and volunteer spirit are all to the civic good. But, the day after Katrina struck, FEMA leaders sounded too much like really good next-door neighbors, and not enough like responsible national officials, in pledging that they would stick by and assist the victims. President Bush called on his father and former President Clinton to lead a private fund drive for Americans in affected states like the one they had launched for Asia's tsunami victims. That is inspiring, but, over the next two years, he will probably also need to sign another half-dozen or so $10-billion-plus federal disaster-relief bills to ensure that all Katrina victims get aid and all jobs get done.

In the same vein, the White House's belated call for a new homeland security agency was preceded, in its first homeland security blueprint, by the argument that private citizens, in conjunction with local government's "first responders," and in partnerships with

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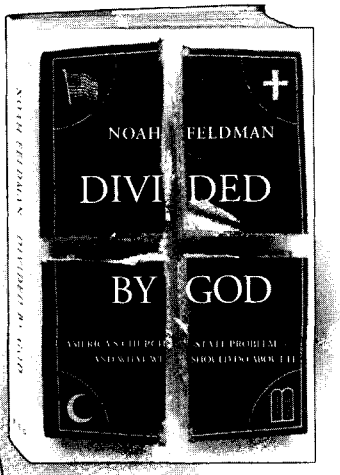
America's Church-State Problem—and What We Should Do About It

Noah Feldman



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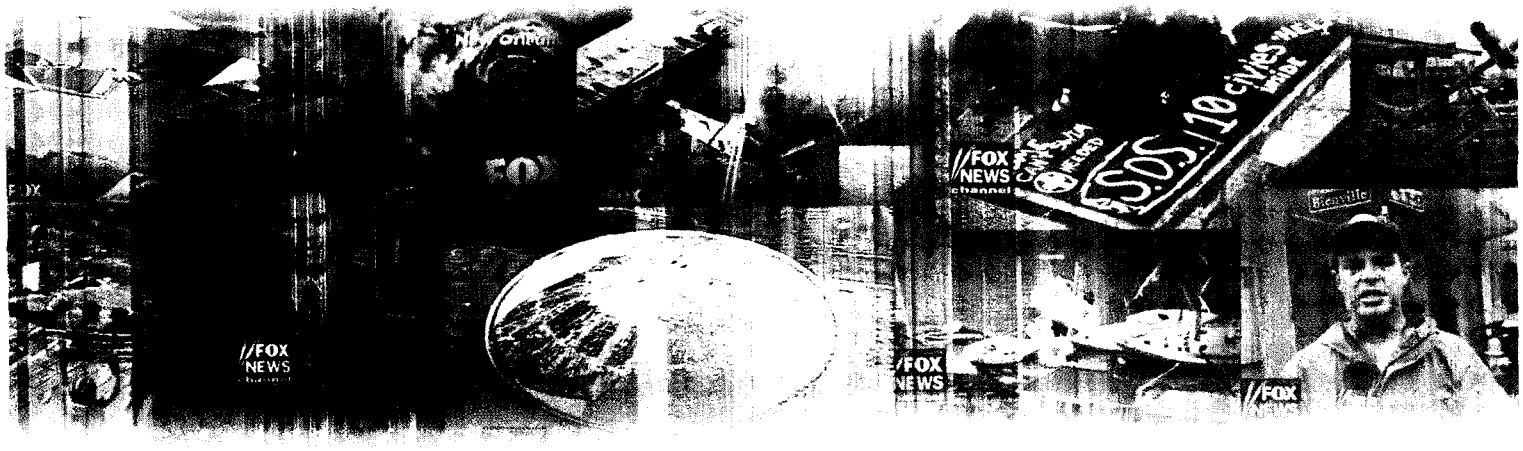

#1 IN BREAKING NEWS COVERAGE

WHEN THE HURRICANE HIT NEW ORLEANS

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corporations and businesses, could carry most of the weight in responding to emergencies and disasters that might be wrought by future terrorist attacks.

The hard-to-swallow truth is that the national government still needs to hire, train, manage, deploy, and pay tens of thousands more, and more specialized, homeland security personnel if it is to predictably and reliably meet its own official border and transportation security goals; to implement its own chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear countermeasures; to effect its own proposed information analysis and infrastructure protection plans; and, as we all now agree, to faithfully, not fitfully or futilely, follow its own emergency preparedness and response protocols.

Better big government would not have spared the Big Easy and other affected communities, but it would have saved more lives and property. Perhaps, as Katrina's flood waters recede, congressional politics will also recede far enough to permit the House and Senate to put effective policy implementation and administrative reform high on their respective pre-November 2006 agendas. ♦

The German Problem

Elections won't fix the constitution's defects.

BY MICHAEL S. GREVE

On September 18, the Germans will go to the polls. The extraordinary elections are being held a year before the end of the Bundestag's regular four-year legislative term, thanks to an elaborate and, to many Germans, distasteful charade. That price would be well worth paying if it produced a government with the will and mandate for much-needed political and economic reforms. Germany "confronts monumental tasks," President Horst Köhler observed in a televised address on the need for fresh elections. "Millions of people are unemployed, many for years. Federal and state budgets are in an unprecedented, critical condition. The existing federal order is outdated. We have too few children, and we are growing ever older. And we must contend in a global, sharp competition." Few believe, however, that a new government—which will almost certainly be led by the Christian Democrats' Angela Merkel—will address those problems, and neither the CDU nor its competitors seriously propose to do so. The tortuous path to the elections and their near-certain futility arise from the same source: By constitutional design, the country cannot have a governing executive.

The architects of the German constitution sought to learn the "lessons of Weimar," where a fractious multi-party parliament, unwilling or unable to form a government, prompted increasingly frequent general elections, government by presidential emergency decree, and eventually, with President Paul von Hindenburg's help, the Nazis' power grab. The "lesson" was to protect the legislature's authority and stability—fatefully, to the exclusion of the quasi-plebiscitary mechanisms through which other parliamentary systems ensure effective government.

Unlike the British prime minister, the *Bundeskanzler* may not call for elections when that is in the government's, or for that matter the country's, best interest. Only if the chancellor requests *and loses* a parliamentary "vote of confidence" may he then ask the president—an otherwise ceremonial figure—to dissolve the Bundestag and to schedule new elections. (The president may, but need not grant, that request.) After Willy Brandt in 1972 and Helmut Kohl in 1982, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder initiated this procedure this past May, following his party's devastating loss in the North-Rhine Westphalia state elections. The outcome, Schröder said, showed that his government's program—a hodgepodge of managerial mini-reforms, grandiosely styled "Agenda 2010"—could not be sustained without a fresh popular mandate.

That made political sense. The Social Democrats are badly divided. Even as Schröder pushed his mildly pro-market reforms, SPD chief Franz Müntefering railed against capitalist "locusts," meaning foreign hedge funds. And while the Red-Green government could have muddled through until the scheduled 2006 elections, Germany would benefit from a government with a clear mandate. Still, Schröder's contention that he no longer possessed a working parliamentary majority was transparent nonsense. The North-Rhine Westphalia results had no effect on the Bundestag, where Schröder's government had never lost an important vote and continued to enact Agenda 2010 reforms. In July, Schröder "lost" his vote of confidence only because SPD delegates were instructed to support their chancellor by abstaining.

The need for such constitutionally induced contortions is exacerbated by a 1983 decision by the Constitutional Court, which held that the Bundestag may not simply dissolve itself. Its lack of confidence in the chancellor must be genuine rather than manufactured. How do we know? The chancellor, the court said, must make a credible showing

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The Genocide Trap

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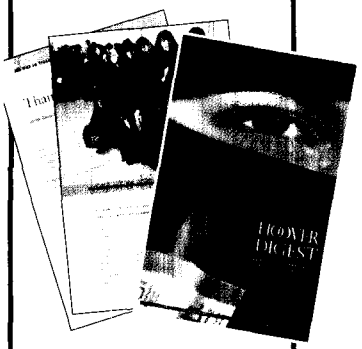

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"The essence of who we are is at stake. Genocide is evil and must be stopped." So declared New Jersey senator Jon Corzine when he introduced the Darfur Accountability Act last March. The evil in question was the widespread atrocities that are still under way in western Sudan, including the deaths of hundreds of thousands of civilians, along with rape, torture, kidnapping, pillaging, and the forced displacement of millions.

Senator Corzine echoed Secretary of State Colin Powell and President George W. Bush, who six months earlier had used the word "genocide" to characterize the death and destruction in Darfur. That was a historic moment, as the U.S. government for the first time labeled an ongoing crisis "genocide." But the real surprise was that this genocide finding did not trigger an urgent rescue operation. It wasn't supposed to work this way.

The 1948 Genocide Convention was assumed to have put its signatories under legal obligation to stop acts of genocide. The treaty defined genocide down from the eliminationist policies of the Holocaust to "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such." But events have shown that it is hard to prove the genocidal intent of leaders while a crisis is unfolding, that it is not always clear that people are being persecuted simply because they belong to a particular group, and that it is uncertain how substantial a "part" of such a group must be victimized in order to cross the genocide threshold.

These ambiguities have muddled the deliberations over Darfur, just as they did past discussions about "genocide" in Cambodia, Iraq, Rwanda, and the former Yugoslavia. The result is a time-consuming debate that David Bosco, senior editor at *Foreign Policy* magazine, calls "a warped diplomatic parlor game: (who will say the G-word first?)." Although Washington has determined that the crisis in Darfur constitutes genocide, the United Nations, the European Union, the African Union, and key human rights organizations continue to dance around the label. Bosco suggests that for cases such as Darfur we adopt the less charged, but no less actionable, term "crimes against humanity."

Now that we know that the Genocide Convention provides no automatic moral or legal trigger to action, steering away from the label makes good sense. It may also make decisive intervention on the part of the United States more likely. Why? To most Americans, "genocide" means nothing less than the absolute evil of the Holocaust. This reinforces Washington's tendency to take an all-or-nothing approach to crises such as Darfur. U.S. logistical and airlift support for African Union troops hardly seems adequate to honor our solemn promise of "Never again."

Ending our fixation with "genocide" will by no means guarantee armed humanitarian intervention in places such as Darfur. But at least the debate about what should be done won't be obscured by an ambiguous treaty or the shadow of history.

—Bertrand M. Patenaude

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that he lacks a viable majority. The president may order new elections only if he finds that the chancellor's assessment was "not obviously false." Finally, the court reviews the chancellor's and the president's exercise of their discretion. This precedent compelled Schröder to rationalize the trumped-up vote and President Köhler to pay lip service to Schröder's absurd averments.

When two delegates contested the process, the Constitutional Court let the elections go forward by pretending to review the farce and declaring it in good constitutional order. As a concurring justice rightly observed, it would have been more honest for the court to acknowledge that the chancellor may dissolve the Bundestag at his discretion, so long as the president accepts his wish. Judicial review cosmetics will only compel the chancellor, president, and court to paint another, thicker layer of lipstick on the next constitutional piglet. The court refused to come clean because the right to parliamentary self-dissolution, which Germany has now acquired de facto, is at odds with her constitutional parliamentarianism. The events of the past months, however, show that the legislature's cherished protections have become dysfunctional.

The path to the election illustrates the elementary point that parliamentary systems are governed not by the legislature (which cannot govern anything) but by parties. With no risk of being unseated by the Bundestag, Schröder did face a real risk of being dethroned by his party—as happened to two of his SPD predecessors, Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt. Knowing that elections would mean not a new mandate but the end of his tenure, Schröder took the dramatic step so as to leave on his own terms and, moreover, to save his divided party by pushing it into the opposition, where it can regroup and reintegrate restless left-wing voters by railing against a conservative government's "neoliberal" demolition of the social welfare state.

Rhetoric aside, German voters do not in fact have the option of a Thatcherite program or, for that matter, any coherent alternative to the existing social welfare system. Just as the constitution guards against executive-led dissolution, so it guards against the formation of a resolute government. Under Germany's system of (modified) proportional representation, parties can gain power and govern only by attracting a very broad spectrum of voters or in a coalition government—through *Volksparteien* and consensus. This once-heralded *Modell Deutschland* tends to take choice, ideology, and decision—in a word, politics—out of politics. It works for a country that needs no serious foreign policy (and in truth does not want one). And it works so long as the economy can support political competition that is constricted by the welfare state consensus.

Germany has sought to take care of foreign policy, more or less, by subordinating the residual need for it to a European supra-state. Her problem is the unchallengeable political consensus on a welfare state that has been known to be unsustainable for two-plus decades. As early as 1982, countless economists and even the left-wing *Der Spiegel* called for drastic cutbacks—to no effect. In the 1990s, a nominally conservative government lavished already-excessive benefits on the impoverished, unproductive East. As *Modell Deutschland* has lurched on, per-capita GDP, once among the highest in Europe, is now third-worst in the E.U. (ahead of only Portugal and Greece). Unemployment is approaching 12 percent, and is twice that rate in some Eastern regions. The nonworking share of the adult population (the unemployed and pensioners) now outnumbers the working share by 55-45 percent, and the ratio of voters who make any meaningful financial contribution to sustaining the system has dropped to 20 percent.

As the transfer economy expands, the political options contract. Schröder's Social Democrats campaign on Agenda 2010 and denounce the demand for yet more redistribution, articulated by a newly formed leftist party that will enter the Bundestag on September 18, as irresponsible populism. The Christian Democrats propose to reform the German welfare state by making it more like . . . the Scandinavian welfare state, which is financed mostly through general rather than payroll taxes. Prominently, the party proposes an increased value-added tax to finance unemployment benefits, a project which the SPD opposes. Transfer-dependent voters demand to be provided for, and no politician can afford to deny them. As more of them have become dependent, and as once manageable economic problems have become "monumental tasks," the political system implodes into a single, increasingly ludicrous choice: *Weiter so*. More of the same.

Germany's impressive postwar economic success and political stability have often been attributed to the sound design of her institutions. The reverse is true: The institutions worked because the economy, relatively unencumbered at the outset, threw off sufficient wealth to pay for an expanding welfare state. That arrangement has crumbled and is now threatening to collapse under its own dynamic. Berlin is not Weimar. But a system that prizes parliamentary stability above all else has begun to produce, paradoxically and willy-nilly, eerily similar economic conditions and political indecision.

To the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, President Köhler's election announcement smacked uncomfortably of the presidential "emergency declarations" of Weimar notoriety. But it was also a beacon of reality in a sea of political pretexts and pathologies. The German voters, for the time being, demand to be coddled rather than led. For that, one must be grateful. What one must ardently wish and responsible politicians should urgently strive for is a constitutional reform that will allow Germany to be governed. ♦

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[1] A January 2005 Tillinghast Towers Perrin study estimated the cost of the U.S. tort system to be $245 billion in 2003, or $845 per person.

[2] Mississippi has recently made reforms to its legal system that, when fully implemented, may change its future ranking.

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A Katrina Recession?

The economic consequences of the hurricane.

BY IRWIN M. STELZER

WE DO NOT YET know enough to make a definitive estimate of the amount of time it will take to get the pipelines pumping at full capacity, all of the refineries up and running, the port operating on a normal basis, and other parts of the Gulf Coast economic structure back into pre-Katrina shape. But we know a lot more than we did in the first days after the storm.

We know that, unlike the local residential sector, the nationally important economic infrastructure will recover surprisingly quickly. This reflects, at least in part, the unambiguous incentive that the private sector oil, pipeline, transport, and other companies have to restore their flow of revenue and profits, compared with the more ambiguous incentives that government workers have—to get the job done, to be sure, but also to be certain that a few years hence they do not find themselves before a congressional committee trying to explain why they sacrificed some procedure such as competitive bidding to the exigencies of the moment.

We also know that early reports of the time it would take to restore many of the damaged facilities were understandably, but fortunately, pessimistic. At this writing, the important 5,519-mile Colonial pipeline, which delivers almost 100 million gallons of gasoline, heating oil, and other petroleum products to 12 states every day, is capable of running at normal flow. Entergy, the hard-hit area's largest electricity supplier, has restored service to more than two-thirds of its 1.1 million customers, despite serious damage to some of its facilities. Chevron reports that most of its offshore facilities were not damaged, and that within a week it had restored oil output to half of normal levels. The U.S. Minerals Management Service reports that only (that's my adjective) about 900,000 barrels per day of oil production is now being lost because of Katrina—about 5 percent of our needs. By the time you read this, the port of New Orleans will be a few days from reopening for business. Release of internationally held stockpiles of gasoline, made available after initial objections by gloating German economic and labor minister Wolfgang Clement, is driving down gasoline prices. Little wonder that stock prices have been benefiting from what Wall Street calls "a relief rally," as in sighs of.

It will probably take longer to get the natural gas transmission and distribution systems fixed, since repairs can only be effected when the systems are turned off and there is no danger of leaks. But Entergy did manage to maintain gas flow to the New Orleans Sewage and Water Board to generate the power required to pump water out of flooded areas. Despite that achievement, however, there is every likelihood that natural gas supplies and inventories will be tight, and prices higher—perhaps 30 percent higher—this winter.

Finally, we know that in disasters such as this America's ultimate defense is the flexibility and resilience of its free market economy. Observers were amazed at the speed with which the New York economy and the nation's financial markets recovered after the World Trade Center was destroyed. When the full story of Katrina is finally told, they will be equally amazed at the speed and efficiency with which cargoes and freight were rerouted, employment agencies responded to the needs of displaced workers and employees, firms arranged living facilities for employees so that they could show up for work, and financial markets adjusted share prices and futures contracts to take account of the flow of information concerning the effects of the storm.

None of this means that the damage was trivial: Insurance industry sources are predicting the "largest insured loss in history," perhaps as much as $45 billion—and that excludes flood insurance, which is the responsibility of the federal government. But even the disgruntled mayor of New Orleans, a buck-passer par excellence, reported "significant progress" by mid-week.

So much for the immediate impact: a supply reduction in the energy industries, a demand shock for consumers filling their tanks at prices previously unimaginable, with another shock to come when the heating bills start arriving this winter. The more important question is the longer-term outlook, which can only be appraised against the background of the economic conditions prevailing before Katrina made her visit.

Over 2 million new payroll jobs have been created in the past year; the unemployment rate has dropped to 4.9 percent (a four-year low) even as the labor force participation rate has risen; 86 percent of Americans say they are completely or somewhat satisfied with their own jobs, and 91 percent say they "love" (32 percent) or "like" (59 percent) their jobs, according to *The State of the American Worker 2005*, a valuable compilation prepared by Karlyn Bowman, Washington's premier poll analyst.

The jobs market is not the only sector of the economy that had the Fed worrying more about over-heating than a slow-down before Katrina hit:

- The manufacturing sector is

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showing signs of strength, as orders and production remain strong;

• the service sector continues to grow;

• the housing market provides upside surprise after surprise;

• consumers have picked the auto lots and showrooms clean in response to the mouth-watering incentives offered by domestic manufacturers;

• double-digit profit growth continues to add cash to the piles already in corporate treasuries.

This doesn't mean that before Katrina every sign pointed towards continued growth and rising employment. Federal Reserve Board chairman Alan Greenspan worried aloud about "froth" on regional housing markets, the politicians' unwillingness to control spending, and imbalances in world trade. Consumers were growing nervous and telling pollsters they would be less likely to visit their local Wal-Mart as $2.50 gasoline bit into their overstretched budgets, even as they signed on to the time-bombs known as interest-only mortgages.

That said, Katrina is unlikely to throw America into recession, unless consumers are so shaken by gasoline shortages and prices that they forsake the malls and realtors' offices in favor of their couches and television sets. Such a retreat is far from certain since good news on the pace of recovery of crude production and refinery capacity, plus a drawing-down of reserves here and abroad, have already brought prices to around pre-Katrina levels.

Former Fed governor Larry Meyer perhaps put it best when he pointed out, "Hurricanes typically have surprising little effect on the economic outlook. . . . Forecasters . . . often exaggerate the effects of discrete events," a view shared by Goldman Sachs economists, who write, "Most [natural disasters] have had little discernible effect on aggregate activity. . . . On balance, the impacts are hard to find in the national data." As the chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers, Ben Bernanke put it, "I expect it's going to be absorbed easily."

Most forecasters seem to have taken Meyer's caution to heart, and avoided a doomsday scenario. David Malpass, global economist at Bear Stearns, has advised the firm's clients that "the U.S. and global economies will continue growing relatively fast despite the hurricane damage and high oil prices." Katrina, he believes, will cut third-quarter GDP, but add to fourth-quarter GDP as rebuilding expenditures accelerate. Economists at Goldman Sachs are a bit more cautious, but nevertheless are predicting a "near-term loss of output followed by a larger rebound."

But don't be fooled into believing that the massive, government-financed reconstruction effort, the government's gift of $2,000 debit cards to victims, and other plans to spend money reconstructing a city at six feet below sea level—a charming triumph of can-do optimism and politics over common sense and economics—will somehow make America richer. A nation can't get rich by spending money to replace assets that have been destroyed. If that were indeed a path to enhancing the wealth of a nation, the government should encourage people to torch their houses, or at the very least break all their windows, and hire someone to rebuild and to repair the damage.

Nor is it clear that even the best-planned reconstruction program can revive New Orleans. Before Katrina obliterated much of the city, its population was declining; its real estate industry was wracking up some of the highest commercial vacancy rates in the country, inducing Sam Zell's Equity Office Properties Trust, the nation's largest owner of office buildings, to sell off its holdings; and its population was over-weighted with households classified by the Census Bureau as "Female householder, no husband present, with own children under 18 years." Those accounted for almost half of all households with children—more than twice the national average. If demography is destiny, that bodes ill for New Orleans's future.

In the end, the accuracy of all forecasts depends on a big unknown—how government policy will take shape. The president has already asked Congress for some $60 billion for immediate relief and rebuilding, and is expected to face the legislators with a bill that will eventually total as much as $200 billion, ten times what was allocated to New York City after the terror attack some four years ago. The effect of that infusion of funds into the economy just might be offset by the deferral of cuts in the inheritance tax, as Senator Hillary Clinton is demanding, and abandonment of plans to make some of the Bush tax cuts permanent.

Then there is the Fed. The president cannot threaten the central bank's vaunted independence by suggesting what it should do about interest rates. But although any discussion of monetary policy would be barred by the desire of both parties to assure the continued independence of the Fed, insiders are certain that Bush used the occasion of his private lunch with Alan Greenspan to make clear his view that the economy has received a shattering shock. Unspoken subtext: stop those interest-rate increases, at least for awhile. Washington's politicians think Greenspan would be mad, just a few weeks after Katrina hit, to raise rates when the Federal Reserve's monetary gurus convene on September 20.

Wall Street, on the other hand, is convinced Greenspan knows that the effects of Katrina are transient, that fiscal policy is about to loosen still more as the federal government borrows its billions of reconstruction and relief funds, and that the economy will resume the growth that has it headed towards tight labor markets and rising inflation, as Michael Moscow, president of the Chicago Fed, and Janet Yellin, president of the San Francisco Fed, pointedly noted last week.

So the gap between Wall Street and Washington never has been greater, with the traders predicting another interest rate increase this month, on the assumption that Greenspan will want to preserve the Fed's anti-inflation credibility with the financial community, and the political types saying,

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"He wouldn't dare," unless he wants to squander the Fed's political credibility by refusing to delay an anyhow trivial rate rise for a month or so. But there is agreement on one point: When the dust settles—more precisely, when the water ebbs—the economy will resume its growth and the Fed will resume its program of rate increases.

Finally, our politicians will have to consider whether they want to do anything about the fragility of the energy supply system. The shortage of refining capacity is so acute that the deactivation of 5 percent of our capacity for a month—the apparent final estimate of Katrina's impact—sent gasoline prices soaring. And we remain heavily dependent on Saudi Arabia's shaky regime, Venezuela's anti-American president, and such uncertain sources as Nigeria for our crude oil, for which we compete with a Chinese government willing to subsidize its companies' efforts to secure supplies of crude. But when gasoline prices rise to levels that might make Americans reduce their consumption and therefore dependence on overstretched refineries and imported oil, instead of cheering, politicians promise to lower those prices, either by beating up on oil companies and "gougers," or by lowering state and federal taxes on gasoline and diesel fuel. No surprise: These are the guys who brought you a multibillion-dollar energy bill loaded with subsidies but devoid of anything that might increase our energy security.

What we do know now that we didn't know just a week or so ago is that we are headed for a one-half to one point drop in the rate of economic growth in the next few quarters from its first-half rate of 3.6 percent, followed by a rebound; a rise in the federal deficit as a president eager to refurbish his reputation for "compassion" and a Congress headed for a reelection campaign open their hearts and your purses to the displaced; and an increase in the intensity of the will-he-or-won't-he guessing game as the September 20 Federal Open Market Committee comes closer. ♦

Muhammad Tries to Vote

Egypt's baby step towards democracy.

BY LEE SMITH

Cairo

THERE'S NO REAL SUSPENSE in Egypt's first multiparty presidential elections. Most local observers believe the incumbent Hosni Mubarak will win 70 percent of the votes—a result that will make him feel sufficiently adored and yet provide a cushion of legitimacy to a regime that is doing its best to keep the United States off its back. I'm spending Election Day with an Egyptian who is determined to exercise his right, even though he knows the outcome. There are only a few hours left to vote, and my friend Muhammad, a 25-year-old journalist, is looking for his polling place.

"I wish we had elections every day," he says. It's 4:30, usually the height of Cairo rush-hour traffic, but we're cruising easily through the city. Muhammad figures the government offices all emptied early when employees were bused en masse to polling places throughout the city. As a reward for performing their duty, presumably by voting for their employer to keep his job, they all got to go home early, so while the streets aren't exactly empty, it's strangely quiet. And for once, life in Cairo—a city of 18 million that's short on all sorts of space, personal, social, economic, and political—seems manageable.

But this being Egypt, it has not been an easy day. Muhammad had his wallet stolen a few weeks ago and so he doesn't have his voter ID card. Many Egyptians are in the same boat, having failed to register by the January deadline. If the nation's 32 million eligible voters had known that the September presidential election would not merely be a referendum rubber-stamping Mubarak's fifth six-year term, they might well have signed up in large numbers. But since it wasn't until March that the president asked for Article 76 of the Constitution to be amended, allowing direct multicandidate elections for the first time in Egypt's history, only a fraction of those eligible are registered. Voter turnout is so low that Muhammad is at leisure to search through dozens of lists for his name. Unfortunately for him, the register is ordered alphabetically by first name, and virtually every Egyptian family has at least one son named Muhammad.

Soon we're directed to a second polling place where we run into Sherif, a childhood friend of Muhammad's who is working as an election monitor. Sherif notes a few irregularities: Some National Democratic party functionaries are pamphleteering for Mubarak without properly identifying that they work for the ruling party; and, bizarrely, one of the presidential candidates came to this polling station to cast his vote and couldn't find his name on the register. He screamed loud and long enough, so the error was eventually corrected. Still, Sherif is generally pleased. "The police have been very professional, and they're respectful of my role here as a monitor."

While much of the foreign press has taken a dim view of the September 7 vote, the State Department is right to call it a "beginning . . . that will enrich the Egyptian political dialogue for years to come." The elections represent a fairly strong trial run for the country's nascent democratic process.

Lee Smith is writing a book on Arab culture.

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The problems with the elections were largely technical and organizational. As one American researcher and longtime resident of Egypt put it: "The government wasn't prepared to hold a presidential election, which was of course intentional. Moreover, the ruling party is at a huge advantage in organizational terms. They didn't really rig the election, but the NDP is the only party capable of mobilization like that."

It wasn't just the participation of other parties that made a difference this time out, but what those parties stood for. "Ayman Nour and the Ghad party gave the elections weight," says Hala Mustafa, an analyst at the Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies and editor in chief of the quarterly journal *Al-Dimuqratiya*. "It's the first time a liberal party has been represented since 1952. The Ghad represents something fresh, a new generation of thought."

Elections have a certain momentum of their own, but democracy activists here and ordinary Egyptians are rolling this stone up an awfully steep hill. Mubarak has been in power 24 years; political life is still largely shaped by the same Arab nationalist rhetoric that brought Gamal Abdel Nasser to power 53 years ago; and for over 80 years, Egyptians and foreigners alike have been debating whether or not Egyptians were even capable of democracy.

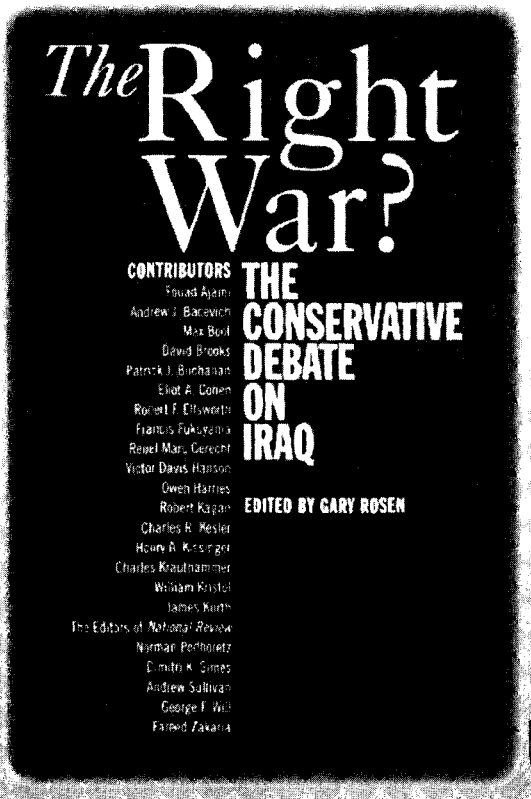
The argument against popular political participation hasn't changed much over the last century: The masses of Egyptians are so poorly educated—illiteracy here is at least 40 percent—that they are easy marks for the ruling elite, whose corruption would yet increase the gap between rich and poor. Of course, even without democracy, the ruling classes have succeeded in keeping the poor and illiterate in their place and, moreover, ravaged the country's middle classes. And it's that enraged middle class that's added yet another layer to the argument against Egyptian democracy: Given the choice, under- and unemployed young men are most likely to cast their votes for Egypt's outlawed, and ostensibly very popular, Muslim Brotherhood.

Muhammad, a philosophy graduate from Cairo University, is certainly underemployed. His first two months as a journalist, he worked for free and then got bumped up to $40 a month. Though he's contributed some of his time to working with Islamist charities, he's hardly in danger of becoming an Islamist activist, never mind a militant. One of his ambitions in life is to translate all of Kant into Arabic. He is not sure whether the reform-minded Kifaya (Enough) movement should have allied itself with the Muslim Brotherhood. "At one of their rallies, they had a few hundred people chanting 'Kifaya Mubarak,' and then the much more numerous Brothers drowned them out with 'Allahu Akbar.' A lot of the people who were stuck in traffic because of the rally just honked their horns because they wanted to get home." Maybe that impatience is an indication of political complacency, but maybe it suggests that the Egyptians are by and large pragmatists who want food on their plates, a safe place to live, and are not predisposed to ideological extremes.

"If you were to get rid of the regime-sponsored anti-America, anti-Israel incitement in the media," says Mustafa, "you'd see that the Egyptians are not highly politicized."

Perhaps that's why Mubarak's costly media campaign was aimed over the heads of ordinary Egyptians and towards another audience entirely. The Mubarak wearing an easy smile and pancake make-up in the slickly produced video ads is not an authoritarian ruler, but a man in an open-necked collar who joshes easily with the press; this Mubarak is not a president-for-life surrounded by corrupt regime hands, but a man at ease with the Egyptian peasantry in all their folkloric splendor; this Mubarak is not an Arab strongman whose decisions consist of winks and nods, but a commander in chief who sits behind a desk and—Saddam will love this one!—signs his name to official papers.

This campaign was for Western consumption, the United States in par-



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ticular, and it wasn't promoting Mubarak's accomplishments, of which there are few to boast. Rather, the regime is campaigning for Mubarak's 42-year-old Westernized son Gamal to be allowed one day to inherit the presidency. Presumably, the United States will not object too strongly so long as Egypt accomplishes a certain amount of reform before the succession. The catch is that the Mubarak regime has significant leverage of its own.

Insofar as the Bush administration interprets its Middle East policy in terms of the global war on terror, the White House is correct to be concerned about Islamist groups. What's less clear, however, is why so many in Washington now believe that it is important for Arab states to integrate their Islamist groups into the political process. The argument runs that incorporating Islamists will keep potential moderates from becoming violent extremists, while also moderating those who are already extreme.

Whether or not entry into the realm of real politics actually tempers ideological fanatics—and there is plenty of evidence in the Arab world and elsewhere that it does not—Egypt is willing to use this line of thought to its advantage. Yes, the regime concurs, Islamists should be brought into the political process to moderate them—and it just so happens that this is precisely what Gamal plans on doing. Egypt has long played the Islamist card against U.S. administrations, but this is taking jihadist poker to a level of gamesmanship that must have the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia drooling with envy.

It is a common misperception that Arab regimes and their Islamist opponents are sworn ideological enemies. It is perhaps more appropriate to think of them in Biblical terms, as brothers with slightly different temperaments who are fighting for a limited resource, power. This is especially the case in Egypt, where both parties' anti-American and anti-Israel rhetoric has dominated political discourse for over 50 years. Islamists have always been a part of the political process here, a sort of bipartisan dynamic that has allowed Egypt to foreclose any other possible alternatives to the regime's Arab nationalism.

"The regime looks at the liberals as their real rivals, which is why it doesn't give them any chance to grow," says Hala Mustafa. "By nature, they can include a host of political trends, even the Islamists, though on different terms. And liberals can communicate with the West, which also hurts the regime, since the regime insists that they are the only ones the West can talk to."

Without Arab liberals, the Bush administration's Middle East democratization program would have fallen on deaf ears, and it was they who, insofar as they were able, exerted internal pressure on the regimes. Washington can keep Mubarak's feet to the fire by

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demanding he empower liberals, not by playing Bre'r Rabbit and asking him to integrate Islamists.

"The infrastructure of the regimes needs to be rearranged," says Mustafa, "especially in the media. There has to be space for other voices, liberal voices, to be heard."

As much as he tried, however, Muhammad wasn't able to make his voice heard this time around. (When the votes were tallied, Mubarak won 89 percent of the vote on 23 percent turnout.) But he'll have another chance in two months time to vote in parliamentary elections. If Mubarak is serious about the promises he's made these last few weeks—promises that he should have fulfilled decades ago—then the November parliamentary elections are his first test in proving his accountability. The mechanisms for ensuring a free and honest election are now in place, and the Egyptian people, perhaps caught by surprise this time around, have shown that they want to express their various political opinions openly. ♦

Kabuled Together

Afghanistan needs durable institutions.

BY VANCE SERCHUK

"WE ARE ABOUT TO DRIVE a stake into the heart of the Taliban," the U.S. military official in Kabul confidently declared. It was late January, three months after Afghanistan had successfully held its first democratic presidential election, and the mood in the capital—at least among American policymakers—was buoyant. Despite Taliban threats, voting had taken place in October 2004 without incident, as had President Hamid Karzai's inauguration in December. The security situation was calm.

Looking ahead, officials could cite further cause for optimism. As the weather warmed, formerly snowbound U.S. troops would be able to launch a renewed series of offensives against the Taliban, working in partnership with their increasingly capable counterparts in the Afghan National Army. An impending reconciliation program, meanwhile, would offer amnesty to fighters grown weary of spending their nights in cold, dark caves, and thereby draw them into the country's peaceful political process. Although countless problems still loomed on the horizon, there was a sense that the counterinsurgency campaign against the Taliban might at last be reaching its tipping point. Was victory in sight?

Eight months later, the answer would appear to be a resounding no. After a swell of extremist violence this spring and summer, the story from Afghanistan has become one of a revived, entrenched insurgency and flagging stability. With four months still to go in 2005, this year has already witnessed the greatest number of American military fatalities since the 2001 invasion to topple the Taliban, with over 70 U.S. servicemen lost since January. Even as the country prepares for its first parliamentary and provincial elections on September 18, peace and stability seem as distant as ever.

This whipsaw from hope to despair and back has become a standard feature of the Afghan war. How many times has the Taliban been declared on the verge of defeat, only to spring back to life? How many times, for that matter, have U.S. efforts in Afghanistan been declared on the brink of collapse, only to rebound? It's a safe bet that, should parliamentary elections go smoothly this month, a note of triumphalism will return to the rhetoric coming from Kabul.

This schizophrenia of perceptions has a host of causes, but much of it can be traced to the inherent difficulty of measuring progress in a guerrilla war. Tactically, there's no question Islamist insurgents have proven that they are stronger, better equipped, and more resilient than the U.S. military and its Afghan allies were predicting just a few months ago. Strategically, however, their impact is much harder to gauge.

One sure sign of the Taliban's resurgence is the growing sophistication of their attacks, especially the use of improvised explosive devices. The focus of insurgent operations has also diversified, with more emphasis this year on soft targets like schools, medical clinics, and government offices. It is estimated that over 1,100 Afghans have been killed in the last six months, including a half-dozen parliamentary candidates and clerics.

The Taliban's tactical successes stem, in part, from the increased freedom of movement they enjoy across the sieve-like border with Pakistan, where they have evidently deepened and expanded their safe haven this year. Captured Pakistani militants in Afghanistan, Taliban defectors, and even Pakistan's own Islamist opposition all allege that insurgent camps have reopened, facilitating recruitment and training of new jihadists.

Even without Pakistani sanctuary, however, it seems unlikely the Taliban would have remained a static force. "Why are the insurgents getting better? One U.S. officer told me, 'We've killed the stupid ones,'" says Kalev Sepp, a professor at the Naval Postgraduate School and coauthor of the official Army study on Special Operations in the Afghan war. "It's normal, and predictable, that the insurgents would become more proficient with time, just like our own soldiers."

Ironically, the most conspicuous evidence of the renewed insur-

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gency—the American casualty count—is also the least revealing of its nuances. Despite the grim headlines this year's losses have caused, nearly half of U.S. fatalities in 2005 were the result of just two incidents. The first was the April 6 crash of a CH-47 helicopter in Ghazni in which 15 servicemen perished—a crash due to bad weather. The second took place on June 28, when a helicopter in Kunar province—attempting to come to the aid of a four-man Navy SEAL team—was downed by insurgent fire; three of the four SEALs were killed, along with all 16 on board the helicopter.

It's natural for such large-scale tragedies to capture public attention, but they have limited value in revealing underlying tactical trends. It is more esoteric, less accessible metrics—such as the quality and quantity of actionable intelligence flowing to troops, and the balance between attacks initiated by coalition forces and those initiated by enemy forces—that offer a better guide to progress on the ground.

In this vein, it's worth noting that one reason American and Afghan soldiers have clashed with insurgents so often and so heavily this year is that they have been seeking out these engagements, pushing into the mountain valleys in southern and eastern Afghanistan that previously had largely been left to the Taliban.

In Ghazni province, for instance, U.S. forces rarely ventured into the remote wastes of the Nawa district prior to this summer, despite the known presence of insurgents there. "We ignored them [last year]," explained one soldier in January. "It didn't matter. They were hiding. Was it worth our effort to send a company-plus there?"

That calculus has evidently shifted, however, with the dispatch of troops from the 82nd Airborne into Nawa and neighboring areas this August. The soldiers conducted raids and cordon-and-search operations over several days, attempting to flush enemy fighters from their redoubts.

The underlying rationale for these and related maneuvers is not to kill or capture insurgents, per se, but to keep them on the defensive in the run-up to the September 18 elections. It is the latter event, much more than the former, that U.S. military strategists maintain is the center of gravity for the counterinsurgency campaign. As one U.S. officer with recent experience in Afghanistan argued to me: "Are [the insurgents] going to be able to continue to mount isolated periodic attacks on Western interests and central government interests? Yes. Is it going to have a significant impact on the continuation of the democratic process and the state-building process and the building of Afghan institutions? Less and less so."

According to this line of thinking, the perception of political and economic progress in Afghanistan is ultimately the key to isolating extremist groups and fracturing their ranks. In the midst of this summer's violence, for instance, approximately 200 Taliban accepted the Karzai government's amnesty offer—driven to defect, in some cases, by revulsion at the insurgents' new, more extreme tactics. "I came back from Pakistan because people in Pakistan had commanded me to kill schoolteachers and parliamentary candidates and burn schools. I did not believe in this," one returnee told Agence France-Presse in August.

Encouraging words—but a measure of caution is in order. Even if the ebbs and flows of the Taliban insurgency are incapable of derailing Afghanistan's long-term development, plenty of other things still can. For instance, while considerable effort has been focused on carrying off the provincial and parliamentary elections as an "event," there has been comparatively little investment in the new structures they are ostensibly establishing. It is symbolically appropriate that the groundbreaking ceremony for the new parliament building in Kabul took place only in late August. Quite literally, we are supporting the creation of institutions without bothering to lay their foundations.

Just as the U.S. military has come to accept that the development of a functional Afghan army depends on its sustained, comprehensive nurturing—with embedded trainers and advisers, a massive web of logistical support, and delicate diplomacy—there is tremendous need for focused, long-term technical and fiscal assistance to the key institutions of the still-inchoate Afghan state. More than dispensing aid to humanitarian-minded NGOs, the United States and its allies need to dig deeper into the workings of Afghanistan's police, courts, parliament, and civil service bureaucracy.

Absent this commitment, the democracy-building and institution-building projects in Afghanistan are likely to begin to diverge, following the example of other states in the developing world where democratic frameworks coexist uneasily with weak institutional cores. As political philosopher Stephen Holmes noted nearly a decade ago of post-Soviet Russia: "Russian elections do not produce anything even vaguely resembling accountable or responsive government largely because of institutional weakness. . . . Elections in Russia, in fact, do not create power. For the most part, they mirror the power that already exists."

Holmes's observation that "liberal values are threatened just as thoroughly by state incapacity as by despotic power" is the perfect epigram for present-day Afghanistan, where victory ultimately depends not just on the dispatch of bullets and ballots, but on the emergence of state institutions that are perceived as more or less legitimate, just, and honest.

This is achievable—the Afghan National Army stands as proof—but it is also difficult, costly, and time-consuming. Is it, then, quixotic to suggest the United States can help the people of Afghanistan in building not just a democratic government, but an effective, accountable one, too? Perhaps—but then, who would have predicted four years ago that Afghans would be voting at all? ♦

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Notes from Under Water

The struggle to survive the disaster in New Orleans

By Matt Labash

New Orleans

I'm not a big supporter of men crying. But I nearly did so while watching the flood waters roll over New Orleans, drowning it in Katrina's backwash. Not only because of the obvious human toll, but also because this Jobian plague befell the greatest city in America. Sure, New Orleans regularly leads the league in all the wrong categories. It's been the fattest city, the most corrupt city, the most murderous city, and so forth. But it's a city you can't help but pine for, and not just because of the grace and grandeur featured in the picture books.

Go there just once, and if you see the right things with someone who knows the place, it's a city that sticks to you like a roux stain on white linen. You understand what it means to miss it if you ever stood in line outside now-defunct Uglesich's, a 10-table dive on the wrong side of town where even the gentry nursed Abita beers on the sidewalk, gladly cooling their heels for hours just to get a crack at the shrimp and grits. Or if you've ever downed Pimm's cups and oyster Po' Boys at Napoleon House on Chartres, one of the most hospitable places on the planet to kill an evening. Or if you've ever pulled an all-nighter in Pirate's Alley off Jackson Square, with fantasists in buccaneer shirts clanking their broadswords after dipping too deeply into the bourbon.

As I write this, I'm listening to *Doctors, Professors, Kings and Queens: The Big Ol' Box of New Orleans*. It features the Meters and Professor Longhair and Sidney Bechet & His New Orleans Feet Warmers, along with all those mad-genius brass bands bringing up the Second Line: Dirty Dozen and Rebirth and Tuba Fats' Chosen Few. My gnawing sadness returns. Because all this music came from a place. And as a fellow New Orleans enthusiast I know says, "It's one of the last places that feels like a place." New Orleans had Voodoo doctors, and stride-piano professors, and Mardi Gras Kings and Queens. The rest of us have Home Depot and Applebees.

The day after the flooding starts, I'm snapped from my melancholy by a phone call from a friend, former colleague, and host of MSNBC's *The Situation With Tucker Carlson*, the very same Tucker Carlson. "C'mon, we're going to New Orleans. You can travel with our crew. We've got all the logistics worked out," he lies. Three hours later, I'm on a plane to Houston, where we rendezvous and load up a giant Excursion ("the Fordasaurus," Tucker calls it). Carlson's manic executive producer, Bill Wolff, assumes the wheel. Medicating himself with unhealthy quantities of Nicorette and Diet Dr. Pepper, he drives us all night to Baton Rouge.

When we arrive at dawn, we attempt, with no luck, to check into a hotel across from the airport. Between evacuees, aid-workers, journalists, and other grief merchants, there isn't an available hotel room within a 500-mile radius of New Orleans (though a night later, Carlson's crack producer, Jamieson Lesko, sweet-talks us in, so we can sleep six to a room). The lobby of the Holiday Inn, decorated in oppressive pastels that aspire to the pleasantly bland, is a staging-area Purgatory. The television over the breakfast bar keeps piping in the bad news about lootings and shootings and rapes, while unlucky evacuees who couldn't get a room sack out in the lobby and parking lot.

One of them, 45-year-old Michael Lucock, does get a room with his parents. But he mans the lobby anyway. He seems lonely, like he needs the company. A movie extra who sports a medic-alert necklace in case he goes into epileptic fits, Lucock totes around a purple velvet Crown Royal pouch in which he keeps a deck of playing cards. He has no house and no employment. He has nothing, except time on his hands. So he tries to engage me in a game by showing me to his favorite overstuffed chairs, but somebody has taken them. "I'm gone two seconds, and now they're looting our spots," he exclaims in frustration.

Many of the uniformed National Guardsmen we meet at the hotel are just back from Iraq. And with all the murder and mayhem going down in New Orleans (reports have

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armed looters trying to peg Blackhawks out of the sky), one says, "I'd rather take my chances in the Sunni Triangle." A private helicopter pilot from Kentucky, who most recently picked up a young pregnant mother with her 4-year-old twins who'd been waiting on a bridge for two days, says, "You shouldn't go there without guns. It's bad, and it's gonna get worse." It's a bit late for that. The only weaponry we managed to find on our way into Baton Rouge was some rubber mallets and ball peen hammers. We also bought a gas siphon, since things have degenerated into *Road Warrior*-like conditions, and gas stations freely sell them.

At the Baton Rouge airport, commandeered by rescue workers, Louisiana Army National Guardsman and Blackhawk pilot Daniel Solis is waiting to fly another hairy sortie. In Iraq, his unit did things like transport Saddam Hussein. "But I felt safer there, because I knew who the enemy was. These aren't the enemy. These are our people." He's trying to keep his head together, since from the air, he's been noticing all the childhood landmarks that have disappeared, including his parents' house, now part of the Gulf of Mexico. Solis says they are so undermanned, with so many people so desperate to get out, that they actually had to bring in SWAT teams to clear landing zones and keep the crowd from "bum-rushing the aircraft." A local police officer tells me that desperate men were snatching babies from the arms of their mothers to boost their chances of getting on a freedom bird.

In the parking lot outside the hangar sits George Lainart, a police officer from Georgia, who has led a flotilla of nine airboats over land to try to pitch in with the rescue. But his crew has been on the bench for two days, waiting for FEMA to assign them a mission. After making serial inquiries, Lainart is climbing out of his skin, and I later find out that his team circumvented FEMA altogether, got down to New Orleans, and stayed busy for five days straight. Though he shredded his hull by running over asphalt, cars, fire hydrants, and other debris, his crew saved nearly 800 people.

"FEMA was holding up everything, they didn't have a clue," complains Lainart. "They were an absolute roadblock, nobody was getting anywhere with those idiots. Everybody just started doing their own missions." While opinions on the ground differ wildly as to who deserves the most generous serving of blame pie among George W. Bush, Louisiana's governor, and New Orleans' mayor, *everyone* I speak with agrees that FEMA officials should spend their afterlives in the hottest part of Hell without any water breaks.

Over at the Pete Maravich Center on the campus of Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, we meet the "lucky" ones, those who were successfully evacuated. In a parking lot, 27-year-old Lakisha Brown stands next to two trashbags full of clothes that she floated along the top of the toxic soup that she waded through for an entire day. Lakisha has a gold-toothed grill, a "Ms. Girly" tattoo, and a BeBe baby-tee pushed-up to reveal a midriff covered with ointment, salving the wounds she sustained while escaping the flood. "I got bruises everywhere on me," she says.

She tried to stick out the flood in her water-logged abode, appealing to passing soldiers for water, "but they couldn't help us." So she took to the soup. On the way out, she passed humans, frogs, pigeons, and rats, some swimming for their lives, others just doing the dead-man's float. She hasn't lost her family, which is split up, she's not sure where. But she's lost everything else—her job, her car, her pride. Right now, her total net worth is "not a nickel to my name—I'm just not used to havin' *nuthin.*" She has no insurance, and doesn't know where she's going, but she knows she has to "get me a job, maybe two jobs." I ask her if she's had anything to eat. She says she hasn't. "It's like I can't, you know. When I start eatin', it just don't taste right. I don't know if it's the worries. . . . "

As we bake in the parking lot, I ask Lakisha why she pitched camp here, instead of inside. She doesn't want to go in there, she says. "It makes me feel like I'm really homeless, which I am. . . . I'd just rather have peace of mind." What Lakisha doesn't know is that she couldn't stay inside if she wanted to. The center's only taking triage patients. The other survivors are given water and food, then left to the elements. Lurleen London learned this last night and the night before, as she, her husband, and their four children (ages seven and under) had to sleep on the sidewalk. Her husband has no shoes, and the diapered son he is holding has no pants, since that's the way they left the house when the water started to envelop them.

Lurleen starts explaining her plight on an even keel, but as she gets deeper into the narrative, she hyperventilates, panicking for her children. The buses don't come, and when they do, there's no room. Her children are getting overheated. She starts wailing hoarsely.

Gloria, a kindly British-accented volunteer and an LSU English professor, tries to comfort her, and to get some answers from somebody. But nobody has answers. "Now, now, your world's been turned upside down, hasn't it?" commiserates Gloria, who tries to calm Lurleen down. It's the only attempt at consolation that I personally witness from even a semi-official source in the four days I spend in Louisiana. I have to leave, so I slide Lurleen 20 bucks, throwing my arm around her to give her a squeeze. She grabs me back like I'm a life preserver, saying, "God bless you" over and over again, hungry for the most meager kindness.

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I walked the avenues of lower Manhattan in the days after the World Trade Center went down, and the camaraderie of people coming together was palpable. But Louisiana after the flood is different and darker. Perhaps it's the scope of the catastrophe, perhaps the undercurrent of violence, but even many of the aid workers seem to have turned to stone.

AP / Bill Haber

On our way down to New Orleans, the stories fly at us with greater fury. At a gas stop, a breathless black man who just escaped the ninth ward, the city's roughest, tells me Charmaine Neville, of the famous musical Neville family, was raped by thugs in his neighborhood as she was trying to help others. The same, he says, happened to a four-year-old girl. A police officer tells us that after a sixth-district police station was flooded, the cops set up shop in a Wal-Mart that looters were still trying to penetrate by running stolen cars into the walls. Through the week, the stories get wilder and weirder. One SWAT officer says he found a bucket-full of looted hair weaves. A friend tells me his cousin knows someone who pulled 100 bodies out of the Superdome after they'd had their throats cut and been stuffed under bleachers. Most of the stories seem too unlikely to have happened—and just likely enough, in the current sinister climate, not to ignore.

Along the way, we make contact with the local friend of someone in our party. He brings along two buddies, one of whom is a reservist cop who helps us navigate around the checkpoints and flooded streets of New Orleans. For most of the past week, this friend was making a stand in his generator-powered Uptown house. He fled to Baton Rouge for a night, then thought better of it, and joins our caravan to go back and defend his home.

An old-line New Orleanian, he has a true aristocrat's distaste for seeing his name in the paper, so he tells me if I write about him I'll have to use an alias. I settle on "Kingfish," after hearing one of his pals call him that over their radios. "Great," he says to me, when I inform him of his new title. "Name me after Huey P. Long. What a piece of s— he was." While I've always had affection for Louisiana's political scamps, many locals hold that the corruption is a lot more charming when you don't have to live under it.

"F— this city," says Kingfish, when we tell him tales [illegible] Actually, he loves his town, which is why he's still here, sparring with his wife on the phone as she and their evacuated kids sit on a beach in Florida. "I love her dearly, but she wants me to come hold their hands on the beach, while I'm fighting for our f—ing lives."

At a time when many New Orleanians are drowning literally, Kingfish feels like he's drowning figuratively. Katrina killed his aunt, who lived in a Gulf coast town in Mississippi. His beautiful house in Uptown, where he graciously puts us up during our stay, is still standing. The only damage it suffered was some dominoed pear trees by the jungle gym, and some slate shingles torn off the roof, now resting at the bottom of his pool, which doubles for the moment as a bathtub. But his businesses are sitting idle or under water or both. They used to net him 30 grand a week. Now they're costing him 10 per. He doesn't know if any business is coming back, and though he's paid roughly $3 million in premiums over the years, he's absolutely certain his insurance company is going to give him the high hard one.

One of the last people in his neighborhood, Kingfish is waiting for "the crickets," as he calls them, to find it and loot it. It's made him a bit crazy. Or maybe not so crazy. He and his friends are armed to the teeth, with nine-millimeter pistols and all manner of shotguns: over-and-unders, side-by-sides, pumps—the works. When we pull into his fenced compound, we're greeted by one of his neighbors, who's been helping keep watch, and who's just finished bathing in the pool. He's wearing tartan plaid boxers and a shoulder-holster. Kingfish has a side-holster which loops around his Brooks Brothers cowhide belt. With all the golfwear and guns they favor, they look like they hail from the lost tribe of Jean Lafitte, the one that decided that

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instead of plundering ships on the high seas, they'd pull an inside job on a yacht club in Newport.

He's frazzled, but Kingfish's New Orleans hospitality is still intact. Grabbing a bottle of Maker's Mark, he's probably one of the few people in the city during these times who worry about whether their guests have enough cherry juice and Angostura bitters for their Old Fashioneds. Concerned about all the looting and crime, he keeps up a steady patter of anti-"cricket" talk. But perhaps spying the black cameraman in our party, he assures me he's not some mouth-breathing racist. Hell, the Meters played his sister's deb party, he says as he puts on some Second Line music from the Wild Magnolias. And just the other day, after the storm hit, he gave 200 bucks to his neighbor's black maid, and let her have one of his cars. "Black and white mix more down here, and we enjoy each other," says Kingfish. "But we also talk a little more frankly about race."

What he and his friends are talking about, besides brute survival, is urban planning and civic renewal. As their city gets washed away, it has occurred to many New Orleanians I talk to that if in fact the city is rebuilt, maybe this time it'll be done right. Many of the troublemakers in the poverty'n'crime centers that bookend economic engines like the French Quarter have been evacuated to other states. Once their FEMA checks run out, they won't have much incentive to return. Therefore, if urban planners can navigate the ministers and local politicos who make their bones leeching off the historically failing system, they might be able to distribute the poor more evenly around Orleans parish, taking away gang and drug-lord base-camps, and gentrifying the city.

Everybody will be better off if the swamp gets cleaned up, say Kingfish and his ilk. The schools are some of the worst in the nation, which is why Kingfish campaigns for vouchers. "It ain't for my kids," he says, "they already go to great schools." And the police are regarded as something of a joke. Scores walked off the job in mid-crisis. "They're a step above the criminals," says Kingfish. "If they see a cricket, they'll step on one."

With all his bluster and cricket-talk, Kingfish is a bit of a cocked-fist altruist. In addition to loading weapons, he's spent the week saving animals and people, most recently a dotty octogenarian who'd fallen and couldn't get up. With nearby Children's Hospital out of business, Kingfish took it upon himself to get a stretcher, and rescued the woman, taking her to Ochsner Hospital instead. "She thought I was a paramedic and complained the whole way," says Kingfish. "Wanted to talk to our supervisor. Said, 'I'm never leaving New Orleans again, look what happens to me.' You're still in New Orleans, you crazy-ass bat."

Kingfish goes out on several more humanitarian missions with us. A nearby shut-in has called MSNBC repeatedly to bring her supplies, and Tucker Carlson and crew are answering the call. (Things are so dire in New Orleans that citizens have taken to calling cable television personalities over police or medics.) As we pile into SUVs, Kingfish tells Carlson to take along his 12-gauge in case things go wrong. Tucker arrives at the woman's modest house to deliver protein bars, instant soup, and three gallons of water. While interviewing her, he notices a letter she's stuck to the wall that speaks to the present state of affairs. It begins, "If found dead . . . "

Waiting outside with Kingfish, I spot a shirtless, hairy man pushing a shopping cart down the street of the abandoned neighborhood. He's flanked by a toothless sidekick, who is apparently jabbering to himself. "Look here," says Kingfish, "Ignatius J. Reilly and his cousin." The cart pusher turns out to be a Syrian butcher at a local grocery that's been looted. His sidekick says, apropos of nothing, "I'm a war baby." Using detergent buckets, they've just cadged some water from an acquaintance's swimming pool. I ask the butcher where he got the shopping cart, and he says they're everywhere. The whole of New Orleans resembles a self-check-out Piggly Wiggly in the midst of a going-out-of-business sale.

We are off, from there, on a Kingfish mission. He has decided to rescue the elderly father of a family friend from the squalor that is the Convention Center, where evacuees are congregated by the thousands, and where all manner of atrocities—from rape to murder—are rumored to be occurring. When we get to "Cricketville," as he diplomatically calls it, there is only one police car in sight. Its lights are flashing soundlessly, three of its tires are flat, and the cop who belongs to it is nowhere to be found. Showing his weapon, Kingfish sprints into the center's concourse, and I follow behind him, not so much to provide back-up as to make sure he doesn't get overly excited and accidentally shoot somebody.

We grab the wheelchair-bound man—he's fairly easy to spot, he's the white guy—and a black teenager darts at me. I brace for a confrontation, but he just says, "I'll get that," grabbing the man's emphysema tank, and helps us load him into the Fordasaurus. We also collect the man's wife and a local freelance photographer named Matt Fleming.

We deposit the man and wife at a local hospital, but Fleming wants to stick with us, switching from the Fordasaurus into the Kingfish's vehicle. He tells us of the hell he just escaped, which resembled a third-world bazaar where the only product being sold is human misery. "Nobody's in charge, nobody's getting fed, people are s—ing in the hallways," Fleming says. Kingfish asks Fleming where he wants to go. But since he's broke and newly

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homeless, he doesn't seem to know. He asks repeatedly to be taken to a train or bus station. "Dude," says Kingfish impatiently, "I don't think you understand what's happening. There are no trains or buses."

We park on the Causeway overpass on I-10. Thousands of evacuees are waiting below for state-sponsored rides to Baton Rouge, or Houston, or parts unknown, and Kingfish tells Fleming this is his last stop. Fleming is reluctant to leave. "Can't I come with you?" he implores. But Kingfish isn't going anywhere, nor can he take on more house guests. I watch Fleming sag, as he starts despondently down the cloverleaf toward the mass of bodies below. I feel so sorry for him that I take up a collection from the MSNBC crew, and run him down to put 100 bucks in his hand. He's not impressed. "I don't know anybody in Houston," he says. "What am I gonna do there?"

Later I go down to get a closer look, and what I see makes me regret ever dropping off Fleming. As I traipse through a field of ankle-deep mud, people are strewn across it, and crowding the highway, hoping to gain passage out of New Orleans. Some have been waiting there for days, sitting in all manner of filth, from tampons to discarded MRE wrappers to human excrement, since the port-o-johns long ago reached capacity.

There, I meet 21-year-old Derrick Hughes, who sits with two girls he rescued, and who tells me what they've been living through in a tumble of words that he can barely get out. "People are stealing, they're hoarding food, some people have none," he says. "I don't understand how you can survive in these conditions, man. The s— I've seen out here, I don't think anybody realizes. Can I tell you something, man? I just had to put a dog down."

After someone abandoned a cocker spaniel in the mud, Hughes noticed the dog face-down, breathing heavy. He tried to force-feed it a drink, but the water just dribbled down the dog's mouth. Then the spaniel threw up. "There's so many people out here, we can't have dead animals lying around," he says. "So I took him back behind the Causeway . . . " He grows quiet, then starts sobbing. "I put a bag on his head. I said a prayer. And I smashed him in the head with a radio. I've never done anything before like that in my life, man."

As I walk across the field toward the highway, I'm accosted by grasping humanity. Half of them want to know if I'm an aid worker, the other half want me to "call their people," which I try, but there's no cell service in New Orleans. Two thirtysomething black gents, who introduce themselves as Gregory and Richard, want me to see the squalor of their encampment, which could give any slum in Bangladesh a run. An old man they're taking care of wets his pants, and Richard has to take him to a makeshift bathroom, which is nothing more than a sheet shielding a patch of bare ground. The six or so children they're looking out for, three of whom are Richard's, are suffering from exhaustion, and one has asthma, his face swollen from allergies. Separated from his family in the flood, Gregory doesn't even know where his four children are. "I haven't seen my babies," he says. "I don't even like to talk about it, it hurts so bad. Ya feel me?"

They've been there for three days, but neither has been able to obtain answers about where or when they're going if a bus ever comes, so I grab them and pull them over some barricades to talk to some authorities. They are shirtless from the flood, with plenty of chest tattoos. Together, we look like a rap group and their manager. When I turn my recorder on as I interrogate a soldier on their behalf, he grows peevish, and tells me to turn it off and move along. When I approach a cop, and ask why these people aren't getting taken care of, he sips a Coke, while reclining against a squad car. "If it were up to us, we'd have all of them on vehicles, and get them someplace safe." Well who's it up to, I ask irately. "I have no idea," he says.

If the I-10 scene could pass as Dante's eighth circle of Hell, then the Convention Center would easily qualify as the ninth. The next day, we go back, minus the Kingfish, for a lengthier visit. The people who are left have moved out to the steps to escape the excruciating smell. One man leads me in to show me around. Parts of it are so dark that even a flashlight hardly illuminates anything. Though I'm wearing thick-treaded hiking boots, I nearly go down four times on the urine-soaked floor. Numerous reporters who've visited, including an MSNBC producer riding with us, throw up from the noxious fumes.

Many have said there are no words to describe the smell, but I'll give it a shot since it's my job. If you packed a trashbag with used diapers, rotten produce, and curdled milk, stuck it in your garage in the heat of August, and waited for a thick porridge to collect at the bottom of the bag, then poured that liquid all over the floor, you'd be about halfway there. Children with nowhere to go lived in this sludge for days without relief, and without any explanation for why relief never came.

On the street right in front of the Convention Center, I see a circle of chairs around a black tarp. A body lies underneath it. It's been there since the night before. I pull the tarp back and see a black man lying in a pool of blood. He wears work pants and a shirt featuring an ascending angel, not unlike the angels standing sentry over the whitewashed crypts in Metairie.

There's a pair of scissors pointing at his head, which look like a murder weapon. But they're not. They were used to cut duct tape and paper, which are attached to his torso, notifying whoever removes him of the phone num-

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bers of his next of kin. Whoever his people were wanted to get the hell out of New Orleans, even if it was without him. They could hardly be blamed.

Witnesses tell me what happened. Dwight Williams, who wears shorts without underwear and no shirt (what he escaped the flood waters in), says the night before, a New Orleans Police Department vehicle pulled up. "For whatever reason, the gentleman made a move to the car," he says. "It took five seconds, the entire incident. The cop opened the door, shot him, and that was it." Another black man walks past me, barking, "He didn't stop. If we don't stop, they got the right to shoot the f— out ya. I'm a refugee in my own country! They shot that old man. F— this here!"

Avon Delpit, a doughy, bespectacled 12-year-old boy with a stutter, sits about 30 feet away on a step. He didn't see it, but he heard it, along with his mom and six-year-old retarded brother who has seizures, and who hasn't been able to get any medical assistance in the six days they've been here. "What happened was," Avon says, "is I was asleep, and all of the sudden, I saw this man dead. See, I have anxiety, so I was going all crazy and I was crying. And my mother had to calm me down. What happens is," Avon continues, hiccuping out his words, "thoughts run through my mind. I get crazy. I need to play a video game to calm myself down. But I lost my video games. I can't play anymore. That's why I'm so crazy. I'm hearing these gunshots, and I'm like, 'God, what am I gonna do?' It's just too hard for me to handle."

And that's not even the worst of it. A block away, I meet Patricia Watts, a postal employee, standing in the back of a line for escape buses, a line she's stood in futilely for three successive days. The buses never came. Watts tells me that there are dead babies, and that they are being kept in the freezer in the kitchen of the convention center. I dash to the side service entrance to confirm this and am forbidden from entering by an Arkansas National Guardsman. "Sorry sir," he says. "We can't let you in." I tell him why I've come, and though he hasn't seen them personally, he tells me it's his understanding that the story's true. "But I can't let you enter in case something happens to you." God forbid a reporter should slip and fall on his way to checking out dead babies in the freezer.

This time, I have no words. So I'm forced to lean on those of Walker Percy, a good Louisiana boy who, contemplating race in *Love in the Ruins*, wrote: "Even now, late as it is, nobody can really believe that it didn't work after all. The U.S.A didn't work! Is it even possible that from the beginning it never did work? that the thing always had a flaw in it, a place where it would shear, and that all this time we were not really different from Ecuador and Bosnia-Herzegovina, just richer."

That evening, my MSNBC companions set up on Canal Street to broadcast live. But I am skunked from what I've seen and heard. For respite, I take a walk through the ghostly French Quarter. Aside from the floodwaters, which encroach from the north as far as Dauphine Street, it is largely intact because of its higher elevation, praise Jesus. I find a rest stop at the Blues Club on Bourbon Street, across from Galatoire's. Three employees are guarding it: an old retired-Navy salt named George Miller, a Richard Pryor lookalike named Ted Mack, and Vaughn Couk, a cowboy with a cigarette-smoking skull tattooed on his forearm (who also runs the Hog Bar, owned by the same people, a few blocks away, a 24-hour establishment that lives by the motto "The place to go when nobody else wants you"). Vaughn so resembles Richard Petty that he once ran into the NASCAR great at the FireCracker 400. Sizing up Vaughn, Petty took off his STP sunglasses and said, "Hello, little brother."

Sitting outside the dark club, they tell me to join them, and Vaughn fetches me two bottles. "That one's for now," he says of the Budweiser. "That one's for later," he says of the water. They give me what I've come to expect from the Quarter—a few pops and good conversation. Though they're suffering damaged houses and lost wages, they shrug the shrugs of men who don't seem to have fallen that far, perhaps because they didn't have that far to fall. Some of them have known greater pain. George, a recent widower, has prostate cancer. And Ted's wife was killed 12 years ago in a car accident, leaving him with two young children.

They're not worried for the most part, though Vaughn likes to point out that since the storm, his pal Ted's afro is flecked with extra gray. That may be true, says Ted, though that doesn't keep him from breaking out the religious material: "'On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.' 'Yea, though He slay me, yet will I serve Him.' He is my everything. I pretend everything else." For hours, we talk about the good and bad things we've seen in their city, and they restore my faith. "We have strong souls," says Vaughn. "We can take pain. We can take loss of everything. If it wasn't for people like us, there's a lot of weak-minded, weak-souled people out there who would blow their brains out. I'd like to think we at the Blues Club help people smile, help them out, make them understand that it's not that bad."

The sun flickers out on us, and as darkness takes over the Quarter, Vaughn insists, "You're not walking out of here alone." I wave him off, telling him he's being ridiculous. But he won't hear it. "They know me around here, we'll be all right." As I stand up, I announce to no one in particular, "The three Wise Men of Bourbon Street."

"We ain't the wise men," Vaughn says. "We're just the only ones left." ♦

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OLDER & WISER?

A symposium on the occasion of THE WEEKLY STANDARD*'s 10th anniversary*

The first issue of this magazine appeared in September 1995, part way through the Clinton administration, and less than a year after the Republican victory in the congressional elections of 1994. The pressing foreign policy issue of the day was Bosnia. The world seems a very different place today. To mark our 10th anniversary, we invited several of our valued contributors to reflect on the decade past and, at least indirectly, on the years ahead. More specifically, we asked them to address this question: "On what issue or issues (if any!) have you changed your mind in the last 10 years– and why?" Their responses follow, in alphabetical order.

Gerard Baker

It's never easy to acknowledge changing your mind on an issue of importance. Sure, we all like to take refuge in John Maynard Keynes's acid response to a sneering critique of his inconsistency and remark: "When the facts change, I change my mind. What do you do, Sir?" But in truth we'd like to think that our insight into human events is broad enough not to be undone by the arrival of inconvenient new facts.

So it is with some discomfort that I must acknowledge that I've changed my mind perhaps more than most in my lifetime. Yet my Damascene journey was largely complete by the time THE WEEKLY STANDARD came along in 1995.

Twenty-plus years ago, I was a fairly predictable tribune of the British left; a social democrat, I called myself, a believer in the mixed economy at home and a global balance of power and even of ideology abroad. It was the 10 years prior to 1995 that changed my mind.

I visited both the United States and the Soviet Union for the first time in the space of a single year in the mid-1980s, and any temptations toward political or cultural relativism were instantly swept away by the experience. When the Cold War ended in 1989, so did the last vestiges of doubt I'd harbored about the moral and political superiority of American-led freedom. When U.S. forces evicted Saddam Hussein from Kuwait in 1991, my post-Vietnam diffidence about the exercise of force also disappeared, and I became a firm believer in the liberating power of American arms (and wished that it had been demonstrated all the way to Baghdad). While my economist friends predicted the steady attrition of the U.S. advantage in the post-Cold War period, I became a (slightly late) convert to the virtues of the Reagan-Thatcher ideological revolution and was steadily convinced that the United States and

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Britain were laying the foundations for the triumph of Anglo-Saxon free market economics.

So was I (intellectually) fully formed by the time THE WEEKLY STANDARD arrived in 1995?

No. On one big question I consider myself a sadder but wiser man this last decade.

Like Francis Fukuyama, I thought history had ended back then, that we were on a more or less preordained glide path to ever widening political and economic freedom, that the self-evident triumph of our free model was so overwhelming that the big challenges of the future would simply be the costs of managing the transition.

I know better now. I know that freedom is as vulnerable as it is precious. That there is nothing inevitable about its advance. That it must be defended at home and abroad with constant vigilance, vigor, and, if necessary, with force.

But in these 10 years I've come to see better than ever, too, that this nation and its people, ably assisted by my own, will prove equal to the task.

Gerard Baker, U.S. editor of the Times *of London, is a contributing editor to* THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Max Boot

Over the past 10 years, my views on the uses of American power have evolved considerably. This should not be terribly surprising because in that time the world situation has changed and my own situation has changed.

Back in 1995, I was only in my mid-20s, and writing primarily about issues like telecom regulation and tort reform for the editorial page of the *Wall Street Journal*. I had generally conservative instincts—anti-Communist, pro-military—but I did not have strong opinions on many specific foreign policy and national security issues facing the post-Cold War world.

Some cold warriors had become isolationists, while others had become realpolitikers with a narrow view of American interests. I was never seduced by the siren song of isolationism, but between realpolitik and what might be called "conservative internationalism"—the doctrine more popularly (if perhaps incorrectly) known as "neoconservatism"—I was effectively neutral.

Should we intervene in Rwanda, Bosnia, Haiti, or Kosovo? Both the realpolitikers arguing against these interventions, and the neo-Wilsonians arguing for them, had good points. I wasn't sure where the merits lay. Expand NATO to Eastern Europe? Declare war on al Qaeda following the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and some incendiary rhetoric from Osama bin Laden? Decrease the size of the U.S. armed forces to take advantage of a "strategic pause"? I confess that I was ambivalent about all these issues, which divided so many in the foreign policy world. But then, in 1995, I wasn't part of the foreign policy world.

More recently, I have developed strong views on many of these subjects. What made up my mind? It wasn't the arrival of regular payments from the Neocon Central Office or the Global Zionist Conspiracy (somehow those checks have never reached my account). It was simply the march of events that was decisive.

The Bosnia and Kosovo missions, for instance, showed how much good "humanitarian" interventions could do, while the slaughter in Rwanda laid bare America's shame for not intervening. The expansion of NATO was a signal success, while the unwillingness to treat al Qaeda more seriously and to put the American military on a wartime footing was a notable failure. So, too, the quintessentially realpolitik decision to leave Saddam Hussein on the throne in 1991 appeared to be a major blunder.

Based on these experiences—and my own study of our history, undertaken for my 2002 book *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power*, which showed that the United States has a far more extensive record of foreign interventions than is commonly believed—I have come to argue for an expansive American role in safeguarding global security. You might say, to borrow a phrase, that THE STANDARD was "right from the beginning"; I am right behind.

Max Boot is a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, *and a foreign-affairs columnist for the* Los Angeles Times.

David Brooks

I've certainly been wrong a lot over the past decade. For example, I wrote a book in 2000 called *Bobos in Paradise* in which I predicted that the highly educated upper middle class suburbanites in places like Palo Alto, California, and Westchester County, New York, would lead us into an age of Clintonian, Third Way politics, reconciling left and right.

Wrong.

Instead, there's been a radicalizing of this graduate-degreed class in the Howard Dean/*MoveOn.org* direction, pulling the Democratic party over to the left. These people really hate President Bush and the religious, corporate

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class (their natural rivals within the elite) he represents.

I also thought politics would no longer be driven by economic class differences. I thought values would matter most. After all, the big split between the parties, it seemed, was between those who went to church and those who didn't.

Wrong.

In 2004, the economic divide between the Republicans and Democrats was greater than in all the previous elections in my lifetime. The Republicans are becoming the party of those who have reason to be optimistic about the future—because they are married or because they live in growing parts of the country. The Democrats are becoming the party of people who have reason to be anxious about the future—because they are divorced or because they live in shrinking parts of the country. I suspect opportunity issues (wage stagnation, dropping social mobility, fights over trade and globalization) will play a bigger role in American politics over the next several years.

But errors are not as important as evolution. Over the past decades, conservative thinking has evolved and its center of gravity has shifted. From a movement that once emphasized economic freedom, it is now a movement emphasizing that economic freedoms must be embedded in a strong society. From a movement that once lauded individual choice, it is now a movement preoccupied with family stability, civil society, and national cohesion.

The best description of conservatism's evolution comes from David Willetts, the Tory MP. He tells the tale as a personal journey, but it really applies to Anglo-Saxon conservatism as a whole:

"You start by making your own way in the world and what appeals to you above all is the language of flexibility, mobility, opportunity. It is the economically liberal bit which brings many people to Conservatism. . . .

"Then you get more tolerant as you begin to realize people don't always behave as you expect. You recognize how wide is the range of human motivation and how much knowledge and wisdom is dispersed. You see the market as one way in which all this diversity can be respected. Perhaps you become more tolerant and open-minded. That's the social liberalism.

"Then you have children and you start thinking about the environment in which they will grow up. You worry about how to transmit your values to the next generation. It can feel as if you are fighting a battle against not so much the state as an incredibly crude commercial culture that tells them there is no more to life but consumption. You begin to discover that there are deep ties and obligations across the generations. You notice that your friends who understand this best and live up to it are the ones with the most fulfilled and satisfied lives. In fact they are much more satisfied than the people who are just following the thin freedoms of mobility and choice."

The obvious thing Willetts is saying is that the Burke and Oakeshott side of conservatism is just as important as the libertarian, free market side, if not more so. This thought has obviously occurred to a lot of people all at once. (Read Rick Santorum's book, which treats the family, not the individual, as the basic unit of society.)

But the underlying point is that conservative writers are now spending a lot more time trying to understand the substratum of human behavior. Rather than treating human beings as economic actors and lauding the entrepreneur as conservatism's paragon, they are discussing the values, assumptions, and mental landscapes that are passed down unconsciously from generation to generation. Why do some groups succeed and others fail? Why are some people raised in environments that transmit one set of values while others are raised in environments that transmit another set of values? This is what Thomas Sowell, Charles Murray, Samuel Huntington, and even Bernard Lewis, in their different ways, have been writing about.

Everybody knew the complicated and politically treacherous subject of inherited group traits was always down there. Now it is pretty much unavoidable.

David Brooks is a columnist for the New York Times.

Christopher Caldwell

The history of this magazine is cloven pretty neatly down the middle by September 11, 2001. Certain of the battles fought in the pages of THE WEEKLY STANDARD in the half-decade before have been revealed as irrelevant in the half-decade since.

My portfolio of political beliefs has changed little, aside from a major sell-off of libertarian absolutism, which this decade has exposed as overvalued. On the big issues of the late 1990s, I still think the impeachment of Clinton was a reckless endangerment of the Constitution and that the Haiti and Kosovo wars were exercises in moral self-regard, to little end.

But the attacks on the World Trade Center lowered the temperature of almost all my political beliefs to way below boiling. They revealed most political stuff as simply not worth getting riled up over. Defending the country against attack is a first-order issue. Defending the country against, say, gay marriage or affirmative action (or promoting them, as the case may be) is a second-order issue. Defending the country against, say, bias at the television networks

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is an irrelevancy that I would not take 20 minutes away from my novel-reading to worry about. It surprises me a bit that not everyone reacted this way to September 11. Americans' propensity to squabble over partisan trivia has, if anything, grown, particularly on the left. Political vanity is unshakable. It's ironclad.

Or maybe I *have* changed. I'll admit that Tony Blair, who drove me up the wall from the time he took office in 1997 until the Kosovo crisis in 1999, now strikes me as the towering political figure of our time.

Christopher Caldwell is a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Eric Cohen

Optimism and pessimism were both easy to come by in the 1990s, when this magazine was born. The optimism was largely technological: the birth of the Internet, the beginnings of the biotech revolution, the age of turning work into play, the promise of great wealth overnight. The pessimism was largely cultural: Gertrude Himmelfarb wrote of the "de-moralization of society," Robert Bork of "slouching toward Gomorrah," *First Things* of "the end of democracy," William Bennett of the "broken hearth." Times were good, but many good conservatives felt miserable. American creativity seemed boundless, but the American character seemed questionable. On September 10, 2001, the cover of this magazine declared "Farewell to American Greatness," with little reason to believe that "compassionate conservatism" would inspire its return.

One day later, everything changed, or so we thought. Techno-optimism turned into techno-fear: We worried that our inventions were coming back to destroy us, and that the destructive power of four conventional airplanes would soon be followed by the apocalyptic power of weapons of mass destruction. Cultural despair, meanwhile, gave way to cultural resolve: We affirmed that our modern way of life was not only worth defending at home but worth promoting abroad. By October 8, 2001, the cover of this magazine was already making "The Case for American Empire," with growing reason to believe that President Bush would embrace the twin tasks of regime change and nation-building that he had rejected one year earlier as a candidate.

In truth, of course, not everything changed overnight. The American belief that technology can set us free remains in force, as we look to embryo research, mood-altering drugs, and genetic self-control to perfect the imperfections of human life. The reasons to worry about American modernity still exist—divorce is still rampant, human cloning is around the corner, pornography is available on our cell phones, and the elite universities remain havens for mediocre minds with oversized egos and fragile spines.

But the political moment has indeed changed, and so have the responsibilities of being a governing conservative. Even as many "neocons" still worry about the problems of modern progress, they rightly embrace America's special obligation to defend modern life against its mortal enemies. Even as many conservatives oppose excessive modernism at home (seeing Judeo-Christian religion as a corrective), they rightly celebrate the birth of modernism abroad (seeing many radical Islamic institutions as the problem). And even as many virtue-loving Americans lament the excesses of freedom in our everyday lives (the "right" to abortion being paradigmatic), they rightly celebrate the benefits of freedom in our political regime.

So: I can't say I have changed my mind on this issue or that issue—though I probably have. But the last decade has clarified the relationship between American responsibility abroad and American virtue at home. By dying for the freedom of others, Americans might recover an understanding of the public burdens of freedom as well as the private opportunities. Just as we did in the late 1990s, we look to American 21-year-olds for excellence and greatness. But the image has changed from the young entrepreneur building billion-dollar software in his dorm room to the young soldier leading a platoon in the desert. No doubt many decent suburban parents would rather see their child at home, flush with opportunities. But many parents—Cindy Sheehan notwithstanding—are proud to see their sons and daughters abroad, bearing responsibilities that a great democracy like America still seems willing to shoulder. And that, at least, is reasonable grounds for optimism.

Eric Cohen is editor of the New Atlantis *and resident scholar at the Ethics and Public Policy Center.*

John J. DiIulio Jr.

Since 1995, I have changed my mind on certain welfare, crime, and government reform issues. Each change suggests the same broader lesson. Baldly stated, the lesson is that policy matters most. Culture aside, policy can drive social trends and determine government's trajectory.

This view is a caution to conservatives who think that

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positive trends, from crime's decline to religion's resurgence, have resulted from cultural self-repair. Supposedly, even baby boomers who once trashed traditional morals and ballyhooed big government have learned their lesson (blue-state boomers being slow learners). It is also at odds with what the late, great Daniel Patrick Moynihan taught about culture's primacy over both politics and policy.

But Moynihan, like me, was wrong to oppose restricting welfare benefits and instituting work requirements. He predicted that doing so would result in millions' falling into abject squalor. I was more sanguine on that count, but we both overestimated the poverty culture's hold on welfare recipients. Urban underclass culture and values are still very much alive. But well-enforced welfare policy changes nonetheless cut the welfare rolls and elicited a rise in pro-social behavior.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, I rightly argued that certain policies (incarceration of chronically violent adult felons, "broken windows" policing, tighter probation and parole requirements, tough-love prevention practices, and related community and faith-based programs for youth), in tandem with target-hardening measures (increased private security, gated communities, and so on), would bring crime rates way down and, if sustained, keep them down. The one looming exception, I thought, was the growing cohort of children living without adequate (or any) adult supervision, and sometimes severely abused, in places where predatory street violence was at record rates. Barring a massive increase in church-anchored early outreach, I predicted, those bred by this extreme moral-poverty culture might drive crime back up by the middle of the present decade.

In fact, both adult and juvenile crime rates continued to fall after 1995, just as they had in the early 1990s. But the drop was far greater in places (like New York) that adopted and stayed with effective anticrime policies than in places (like Baltimore) that did not. Today youth crime is back in the news, but the problem is reemerging in places (notably Boston) where such policies, including street-level police-probation-preacher partnerships, have not been fully sustained; it is serious but semi-contained in places (like Philadelphia) that belatedly instituted targeted youth-violence reduction policies in only some police districts. (My mid-90s mantra "Build churches, not jails" still applies.)

Beginning in the mid-70s, mass opinion about government became progressively more conservative. On several occasions in the mid-90s, I addressed newly minted House members on the subject of government reform. I thought that conservative Republicans would govern very differently from liberal Democrats. But even after Reagan, and Gingrich, and the Republican capture of both the White House and the Congress, and the increase in the number of states controlled by Republicans, and the rise of popular conservative mass media—even after that surge in conservative power and influence—a great deal hasn't changed. Liberal Democrats' decades-old pattern of deficit spending (including massive social spending), their big regulatory regimes and bureaucratic structures (plus new ones birthed by Republicans), and perverse intergovernmental grant-making systems (with their bias against qualified religious nonprofits and grassroots groups) remain. Apparently, even from the grave, policy rules.

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Noemie Emery

One thing I changed my mind about in the last 10 years is the Democrats' future. Ten years ago, I believed that they had one. They had lost Congress, but they had a president who, whatever his faults, was in touch with reality. He had campaigned and won as a "new kind of Democrat" who could build a bridge to the 21st century, and then coax the donkey across it, as he signed the welfare reform bill and went into Bosnia. He was no JFK—except in the wrong ways—but at least he seemed headed, if slowly, in that direction. Who could have dreamed it was all an illusion? Who ever dreamed that 10 years later, his party would be back where it had been 10 years before him, almost as if he had never existed?

Nothing has changed with the Democrats for 37 years. In 1968, they split in half over war and values, nominated an old liberal, and the doves all walked out. Four years later, they nominated a new liberal, and the hawks all walked out. Four years after that, they nominated a hawk (sort of) who turned into a wimp, and got shellacked four years later. Four years later, they nominated his veep, a big government dove in love with identity politics, and had the worst defeat ever. In response, moderates founded the Democratic Leadership Council, to wrest the party away from the liberals who had been losing with such regularity. They had what looked like a great team of horses, with Al Gore and Joe Lieberman, and of course Clinton; and when Clinton and Gore won, it seemed they had traction. But 20 years later, they're still wrestling away, locked in trench warfare. Clinton had only elided the splits, not resolved them. Neither side gains, neither side loses, and neither side gives up an inch. Late last year, the *New Republic*'s Peter Beinart urged a purge of the left, and couldn't even convince his

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own colleagues. Bill Clinton had his little embarrassments, Al Gore lost his mind in the Florida recount, and Joe Lieberman is perhaps the one man in the universe liberals hate more than Bush.

The Democrats nowadays seem like a bad movie, or rather a rerun, with the old script they have played many times. At each convention, they have millions of flags, zillions of pledges, and talk a great deal about God, faith, and values, and no one believes them. In 1972, there was George McGovern, a World War II fighter pilot who turned into a peacenik; in 1976, there was Jimmy Carter, the naval officer who turned into a wimp. So it was no surprise in 2004 when they came up with John Kerry, their ideal war veteran, famous less for what he did in Vietnam than for what he did after, when he turned against the war and the military, and accused fellow servicemen of terrible crimes. After each loss, they have the same argument, which involves the same gestures, and ends the same way. Ten years ago, I thought they could change, or I thought Clinton could change them. I never imagined they would so quickly revert to the status quo ante. And so, I was wrong.

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Joseph Epstein

I have changed my mind politically over the past 10 years only in not making it up as quickly and easily as I used to do. I still know with some precision what I dislike but have become less certain about what I like. I begin to resemble, I fear, the man who is vehemently against picketing but doesn't know what to do about it.

In the useful division of political thinkers between those who are certain of their positions and those whose clarity is clouded with doubt, I fall among the latter. Tocqueville, a doubter, complained in his *Souvenirs* that almost inevitably when he got up to speak in the National Assembly complexities and qualifications rushed in on him, rendering him indecisive and unpersuasive. Bismarck, the very reverse of a doubter, in his twenties given an important diplomatic assignment, exclaimed that he knew his duty, and whether or not he had the understanding to bring it off was not his but God's concern.

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, the well-known omelet chef, when told that they were killing the workers in Germany, replied: "Good. Worse is better [for the Revolution]." Adlai Stevenson, during his 1952 and '56 presidential campaigns, caused many a plane to circle airports over and over because he couldn't get the speech he was composing just right.

In politics, the non-doubters, the straight-ahead men, get the job done; the doubters make the more charming lunch companions. No one side, left or right, has a monopoly on doubters or straight-ahead men. I noted this many years ago when listening to frequent debates staged between Milton Friedman and John Kenneth Galbraith. The two agreed about absolutely nothing; what they had in common was their utter certitude (which, as of the moment, seems much more warranted in Friedman's than in Galbraith's case).

Although they have their uses, doubters are not finally altogether comfortable in politics. Nor are their equivocations always welcome. The time always arrives in politics when one must swallow one's doubt, get in or out, stay on or get off the bus.

Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the most intelligent man in the United States Senate during the past half century, was asked, at the close of his career, to introduce, and by doing so suggest his support for, Hillary Clinton as the candidate seeking to fill his Senate seat. Moynihan had no love for the Clintons, whom he thought much more interested in power than in reality. How difficult it must have been for him to put Mrs. Clinton forth as the Democratic party's candidate! But he did it. In the end, Pat Moynihan got on the bus.

Odd but politics, that least scientific of human activities—"Political science," my friend Edward Shils used to say, "with the 'science' understood as in Christian Science"—requires the most certainty on the part of its practitioners. In the end, I, too, climb on the bus, but with faltering step and usually only after being nudged from behind. I hope nobody notices that I keep a transfer in my back pocket. If you're free for lunch, give me a call.

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Andrew Ferguson

THE WEEKLY STANDARD was conceived in the mad adrenaline rush that followed the Republican takeover of the Congress in 1994. The magazine seemed like a good idea at the time, and—you can decide for yourself how much to discount for self-interest here—even now it seems like a good idea, maybe now more than ever.

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Back then, the genealogy of the conservative movement was still traceable. Its intellectual origins were always in evidence and almost entirely praiseworthy. For 40 years William F. Buckley and his colleagues at *National Review* had undertaken the periodic and exhilarating work of mucking out the stables. Poof went the anti-Semites, out went the Randians, the Falangists, the eugenicists, nutters of all kinds. Buckley's purges weren't merely for the sake of ideological purity. He and his allies were trying to maintain some kind of threshold of intellectual seriousness, too.

Anyone who's been paying attention will have felt forced to adjust his view of the conservative movement since then. The Republican takeover—which is to say, political success—dealt the mortal blow. Conservative institutions, conceived for combat, have in power become self-perpetuating, churning their direct-mail lists in pursuit of cash from the orthodontist in Wichita and the Little Old Lady in Dubuque, so the activists can continue to fund the all-important work of . . . churning their direct-mail lists. The current story of Jack Abramoff's lucrative self-dealing, involving as it does such movement stalwarts as Ralph Reed and Grover Norquist, may seem lunatic in its excesses, but the excesses aren't the point. The point is the ease with which the stalwarts commandeered the greasy machinery of Washington power. Conservative activists came to Washington to do good and stayed to do well. The grease rubbed off, too.

Under the circumstances, it's not much of a surprise that the threshold Buckley tried to maintain has collapsed. I suppose any philosophical tendency, as it acquires power and popularity, will simplify itself, define itself downward. That's democratic politics for you. But something more corrosive is also at work. Marshall McLuhan was righter than anyone ever would have guessed. The medium really is the message. Conservatism nowadays is increasingly a creature of its technology. It is shaped—if I were a Marxist I might even say determined—by cable television and talk radio, with their absurd promotion of caricature and conflict, and by blogs, where the content ranges from Jesuitical disputes among hollow-cheeked obsessives to feats of self-advertisement and professional narcissism (*Everyone's been asking what I think about . . . You won't want to miss my appearance tonight on . . . Be sure to click here for my latest . . .*) that would have been unthinkable in polite company as recently as a decade ago. Most conservative books are pseudo-books: ghostwritten pastiches whose primary purpose seems to be the photo of the "author" on the cover. What a tumble! From *The Conservative Mind* to *Savage Nation*; from Clifton White to Dick Morris; from Willmoore Kendall and Harry Jaffa to Sean Hannity and Mark Fuhrman—all in little more than a generation's time. Whatever this is, it isn't progress.

It's a lucky stroke for conservatives that we never believed in progress anyway.

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David Frum

Ten years ago, I thought of immigration as a technical and law-enforcement issue, easily dealt with.

Back then, I was already concerned that the skill level of legal immigrants had dropped off sharply since 1970. (Before 1970, foreign-born Americans on average earned higher wages than native-born over their lifetimes; after 1980, they began to earn substantially less.) I was concerned too about the rise in illegal immigration, despite the tough new enforcement measures promised as part of the immigration amnesty of 1986.

It seemed to me then, though, that the worst was probably past. Americans were so very obviously angry about the harm done by misconceived immigration policies that some politician was sure to come along and reclaim the issue from the xenophobes, just as Richard Nixon had reclaimed law-and-order from George Wallace in 1968.

Was I wrong!

Over the past decade, the will to enforce immigration rules has collapsed to something close to zero. Imagine if the United States enforced its drug laws the way it enforces its immigration rules. Local governments would be building open-air drug markets the way they now build hiring halls for "day labor." The federal government would forbid private employers to use drug tests, as it now forbids them to ask non-English-speaking employees for proof of legal residence. It would make it as easy to relabel illegal drugs as legal as it now makes it for illegal immigrants to get driver's licenses and other identity papers. When it intercepted a shipment of drugs, it would charge the smuggler—and then release the drugs back onto the market for resale. It would be nonsense then to talk about "illegal" drugs, wouldn't it?

The fact is that the United States has a single immigration policy, of which illegal immigration is regarded by the authorities as simply the lowest-paid component. The commitment to the non-enforcement of the law is so strong that not even 9/11 could shake it. And so today the United States is debating yet another amnesty and a guest-worker program that would in effect open the borders to pretty much anybody who wished to enter.

My own thinking, since that's the question here, has evolved in this direction: The immigration laws need to be

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enforced. As acts of Congress, they stand as the supreme law of the land, and state and local governments cannot be allowed to ignore and defy them. Talk of amnesty and guest-worker programs is not only premature, but profoundly improper. Legal immigration should be reoriented as a way to recruit skilled labor and mitigate shortages in specific labor categories. The total number of immigrants to be accepted should be set in line with the birth rate. The Center for Immigration Studies estimates that births to immigrant mothers now account for one out of every four American births; births to illegal mothers, for one out of every ten. Like wine with food, immigration is splendid as an accompaniment to natural increase, dangerous as a substitute. Refugee admissions should remain generous—the United States, Canada, and Australia have a special role to play as the ultimate refuge for people and groups under threat—but asylum should be focused on situations of true and acute danger and should not be allowed to expand into yet another route around the law, as has happened in Europe.

Is this a change of mind? Maybe it would be more accurate to describe it as an opening of the eyes.

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David Gelernter

Ten years ago it seemed impossible that conservatives would enter the zoo-house of American culture with hose and broom and put things back into decent shape so a normal person could go inside and not be overwhelmed by the fumes of unregenerate anti-intellectualism, anti-Americanism, and sheer hatred of art, literature, and religion. Conservatives seemed to care about politics exclusively. So long as they won elections, U.S. culture could go hang. Today the cultural mainstream is still left-liberal, but things are changing fast.

A decade ago several problems seemed representative. No one dared or cared to start a new conservative book-review weekly in New York. Books are the center of intellectual life, New York is the center of book publishing, and it seemed insane that conservatives should allow the field to be dominated by two left-liberal weeklies. (The *New York Times Book Review* has changed for the better since then.) New York was *meant* to have one book weekly on the left (the *Times*) and one on the right (the *Herald Tribune*). Since the *Tribune* died in the '60s, the field has been grossly unbalanced; but conservatives didn't seem to care.

Abolishing the federal holidays to honor Washington's and Lincoln's birthdays was a mistake and should have been undone. And I awaited the moment when some brave politician would stand in front of the Vietnam memorial (a black slab in a pit) and say "Tear down this wall! Remove it from its symbolic grave and rebuild it above ground, and for God's sake add some words of tribute and thanks."

None of these things ever happened. But there have been many other developments. Conservatives are far less culturally complacent than I feared.

Talk radio was already important then and is vastly more so now. Fox has made it safe to watch TV news again. Conservative blogs like Power Line and many others have knocked the news game sideways. Conservative think tanks like AEI, the Manhattan Institute, and many more (e.g., the Shalem Center in Israel) rank among the most important intellectual centers in the world. Within the next generation, some are bound to become full-fledged, degree-granting institutions with graduate students desperate to get in.

Several big wheels of establishment journalism have made themselves ridiculous (with a little help from conservative blogs). There's a new conservative newspaper in New York (who would ever have believed it?), and it's doing fine. There are several new conservative book publishing houses. The New York art world no longer defines its mission exclusively in terms of fomenting hatred for white American males and Christianity. The main conservative magazines (such as this one) have never looked better. And Norman Podhoretz has published a book about the prophets of the Hebrew Bible. That a brilliant literary critic should have devoted nearly all his time to politics symbolized the long-lasting political state of emergency. But the emergency seems to have quieted from orange to yellow, or to eggshell pink (or something), and the culture bosses of the left had better enjoy their cultural predominance while it lasts. They have been numbered, weighed, and found wanting. They are on the way out.

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Reuel Marc Gerecht

Ten years ago, I believed reluctantly in the unavoidability of dictatorship in the Middle East. Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, the Saudi royal family, and the Algerian military junta were all, so it seemed to me, better than

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the alternative: Islamic militants who would bring an even less liberal order.

The perversions of these regimes were already evident—all had, through both oppression and support, given rise to nasty strains of Islamic fundamentalism. But the Saudis had played a special role. In their great fear of Iran's radical revolution—whose chiliastic appeal had provoked a nearly successful murderous assault upon the royal family in the Great Mosque in Mecca in 1979—the Saudis went into hyper-drive promoting Wahhabism, their state creed and the most lethally anti-Shiite and anti-Western form of Sunni fundamentalism. It was enormously difficult then to stomach the historical nonsense that one often heard from foreign-service officers at the Department of State, from senior U.S. military officers attached to the Middle East-centered Central Command, and from executives of American oil companies, to wit: The Saudi royal family was a great friend of the United States, and Saudi Islam was a traditional faith that did not threaten its neighbors. (Oil company executives and military officers who rarely know Arabic or much Islamic history can be forgiven their views; towards foreign-service officers—who went to school to learn Arabic and could, if so inclined, leaf through the voluminous tracts of Wahhabi literature published by the Saudi government and distributed worldwide—it is harder to be charitable.)

Ten years ago it was evident that the Saudis, and the Wahhabi religious establishment to which the family is wed, had gone far to destroy the tolerance traditional in Sunni Islam throughout the Middle East. Especially significant was the change in once-great religious schools like al Azhar in Cairo, a onetime staunch and successful opponent of the hatred that marauding Saudi warriors and their missionaries had always brought with them for two centuries. Oil money, notably in the form of Wahhabi-funded religious scholarships and stipends, and the strategic eminence that the United States helped give to Saudi Arabia, degraded the Middle East's more humane and forgiving ethics, descended from the Ottoman empire. By the 1990s, the double assault of Wahhabism and Arab nationalism (another historic love of many foreign-service officers in the Near Eastern Bureau) had made the modern Arab Middle East a truly ugly place.

Yet despite all of this, it was intellectually difficult to move past the fear of another Islamic revolution. For those of us raised on European, especially Anglo-Saxon, history, which underscored (and esteemed) the slow evolution of democratic institutions and sensibilities, it was particularly hard to see the building blocks for democratic societies in the Muslim Middle East. It appeared to many, including me, that an Atatürkist approach—enlightened dictatorship ushering in a secular, democratic, liberal order—was the more likely route for a democratic evolution in Arab countries.

September 11 demolished this view (which, admittedly, was pretty shaky). Dictatorships that both encouraged and suppressed Islamic militancy had in great part given us Osama bin Laden and his new diehard holy-warrior creed. Waiting for an Arab Atatürk had become a lethal cul-de-sac. Islamic ethics were evolving in a catastrophic direction. September 11 opened my eyes to a widespread internal Muslim evolution that I should have seen before. It was blatantly obvious in Iran, where the revolution's democratic and theocratic aspirations were in a death struggle, and the latter were clearly losing, among the people and the clergy. A democratic reformation of Shiite thought was well underway. And if one bothered to look, the same process, not as far advanced, was happening in the Sunni Muslim world.

The 2003 Anglo-American invasion of Iraq has kicked this democratic discussion into high gear. As in Shiite Iran, in Sunni Arab countries democracy will eventually succeed if the traditional community—particularly the religious classes and what is often called, somewhat inaccurately, the fundamentalist movement—becomes part of the great democratic debate. This is exactly the opposite of what I expected: liberal or dictatorial secularists' leading the way to democracy in the Middle East.

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Robert Kagan

Today, if you read even respectable journals, it appears that no more than six or seven people ever supported going to war in Iraq. That's not the way I recall it. I recall support being pretty widespread from the late 1990s through the spring of 2003, among Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives, as well as neoconservatives. We all had the same information, and we got it from the same sources. I certainly never based my judgment on American intelligence, faulty or otherwise, much less the intelligence produced by the Bush administration before the war. I don't think anyone else did, either. I had formed my impressions during the 1990s and entirely on the basis of what I regarded as two fairly reliable sources: the U.N. weapons inspectors, led first by Rolf Ekeus and then by Richard Butler; and senior Clinton administration officials, especially President Clinton, Madeleine Albright, William Cohen, and Al Gore.

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I recall being particularly affected by the book Butler published in 2000 called *The Greatest Threat: Iraq, Weapons of Mass Destruction, and the Growing Crisis of Global Security*, in which the chief U.N. inspector, after years of chasing around Iraq, wrote with utter certainty that Saddam had weapons and was engaged in a massive effort to conceal them from the world. "This is Saddam Hussein's regime," Butler wrote, "cruel, lying, intimidating, and determined to retain weapons of mass destruction."

The big turning point for me, I suppose, was the confrontation between Saddam and the Clinton administration that began in 1997 and ended in the bombing of Iraq at the end of 1998. The crisis began when Saddam blocked U.N. inspectors' access to various suspect sites, and the Clinton administration launched a campaign to prepare the nation for war. I remember listening to Madeleine Albright compare Saddam to Adolf Hitler and warn that if not stopped, "he could in fact somehow use his weapons of mass destruction" or "could kind of become the salesman for weapons of mass destruction." I remember William Cohen appearing on television with a five-pound bag of sugar and explaining that that amount of Anthrax "would destroy at least half the population" of Washington, D.C. Even as late as September 2002, I remember Al Gore saying, in a speech to the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, that Saddam "has stored secret supplies of biological and chemical weapons throughout his country."

President Clinton and his top advisers had declared Saddam's continued rule intolerable, and I recall joining several others in a letter to the president in January 1998 insisting that "the only acceptable strategy" was one that eliminated "the possibility that Iraq will be able to use or threaten to use weapons of mass destruction." That meant "a willingness to undertake military action," and it meant eventually "removing Saddam Hussein and his regime from power." The signatories included Francis Fukuyama and Richard Armitage and Robert Zoellick, among others. About a year later, the Senate passed a resolution, cosponsored by Joseph Lieberman and John McCain, providing $100 million for the forcible overthrow of Saddam. It passed with 98 votes. On September 20, 2001, I joined many others in another letter to President Bush, in which we endorsed then-Secretary of State Colin Powell's statement that Saddam was "one of the leading terrorists on the face of the earth." We argued that "any strategy aiming at the eradication of terrorism and its sponsors must include a determined effort to remove Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq." That letter, too, was signed by Francis Fukuyama, Eliot Cohen, Stephen Solarz, Martin Peretz, and many others. I recall broad bipartisan support for removing Saddam right up to the eve of the war. In March 2003, I signed a bipartisan letter in support of the war with a number of former Clinton officials, including Deputy National Security Adviser James Steinberg, Ambassador Peter Galbraith, Dennis Ross, Martin Indyk, Ivo Daalder, Ronald Asmus, and Robert Gelbard.

We were asked what issues we've changed our minds about. My father recalled for me a line from Thucydides, which Pericles delivered to the Athenians in the difficult second year of the three-decade-long war with Sparta. "I am the same man and do not alter, it is you who change, since in fact you took my advice while unhurt, and waited for misfortune to repent of it."

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Tod Lindberg

I remember walking down by the Capitol one day in 1999, brooding about empire—specifically, the power position of the United States on the eve of the new millennium as compared with that of the Roman Empire 2,000 years before. By now, such comparisons are banal, but at the time, there was much fresh in them to ponder as one tried to get a fix on what the world looked like.

I concluded, mid-brood, that there were really only two regions of the world where the United States had no serious interests: sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia. This bothered me. I would have welcomed a far broader geographical expanse in which the United States did not have to remain engaged, where we were not committed as the guarantor of security or protector of interests vital to us and to others happy to leave us the trouble and expense of defending them. Our colleague P. J. O'Rourke published a book in 1995 called *All the Trouble in the World: The Lighter Side of Overpopulation, Famine, Ecological Disaster, Ethnic Hatred, Plague, and Poverty.* Comedy aside, "all the trouble in the world" struck me as a pretty good description of what the United States would have no choice but to deal with for the foreseeable future—welcome exceptions duly noted.

If Africa was a slough of incompetent dictatorial government, brutal politics, rampant disease, and outbursts of genocide, well, this was tragic, but it did not greatly impinge on the United States, and we were busy with other problems, such as containing Saddam Hussein, facing down Slobodan Milosevic, securing a Western orientation for the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, keeping China from taking Taiwan by force, coping with Russian backsliding and the problem of loose nukes, maintaining access to oil, and so on. And while loose talk about revisiting the Great Game of nineteenth-

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century empire-building in Central Asia was newly in vogue, it seemed obvious to me that the only sure way to avoid coming out a loser in the Great Game was not to play.

Needless to say, after 9/11 we realized that we do indeed have interests in Central Asia. And the problems posed by "failed states," such as those in sub-Saharan Africa, loomed newly large as well. It was not, however, chiefly on the calculation of national interest that my thinking then was wrong.

If the American way of life (or "Western civilization") is worth defending, and it is, that's not just because we are Americans (or Western in origin or orientation), but because of the substantive content of our way of organizing political and social relations—the classically liberal character of our open, pluralistic, democratic, bourgeois societies.

Yes, for our own sake, we do indeed need to face down those violently opposed to our liberal order. We must defend ourselves. But that's not enough. We need to attend also to the needs of those who do not have the advantage of living in societies like ours. If we believe all people have a right to liberty, then we have a responsibility to help them overthrow governments that oppress them and build something better. If we believe our own claims about a right to life possessed by all people, then we have a responsibility to help vindicate the rights of those who are unable to protect themselves in instances of genocide, mass killing, and ethnic cleansing.

No, we must not be reckless. Recklessness would weaken us, and we need strength to pursue our ideals. On which we must be clear: Sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia, along with everywhere else, matter in the first instance not just because of our interests, but because of the people there.

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Harvey Mansfield

At my age it is difficult to learn, but it's still possible to relearn. From 9/11, the salient event of the last 10 years, I relearned the distinction between friend and foe. For the United States to be hit in a manner so viciously effective was quite unexpected, and it put me in an extraordinary anger that has not subsided. The attack had its preliminaries now visible from hindsight, but nothing seemed to predict the appalling success for evil that occurred.

A sudden, successful attack by evil men is always a shock. Not only does it interrupt the routine and rhythms of peace (which include of course much partisan infighting), but it also challenges our belief in justice. For justice demands to be enacted and made good. You cannot believe in justice without believing in the viability of justice, and that means justice enforced and justice in peace. It is not only peaceniks who believe in peace. But peace is always a particular peace, the peace of our particular justice, not universal or perpetual peace. The peaceniks reveal this in their bumper stickers that say that if you want peace, first get justice. Their justice, however, tries to overcome the distinction between friend and foe so as to include everybody. When everybody is included, peace will be universal and perpetual because nobody will have a claim that peace as it stands is unjust to him or to his party. This would be peace with a capital P, and it would supersede all the particular peaces resulting from particular claims to justice.

Liberalism in its 18th-century phase had a notion of universal peace that was based on universal commerce.

Liberalism in its 18th-century phase had a notion of universal peace that was based on universal commerce. It said that if nations could not agree on justice they could at least agree on the benefit of trade with one another, putting aside questions on which they could not agree. But the peace liberals of our day are not friendly to commerce, which brings selfish benefit unequally. (Which is worse, selfishness or inequality?) They prefer culture to commerce. But to be inclusive, culture must be multicultural. To have this, one must go beyond setting aside awkward questions and become nonjudgmental—*actively* nonjudgmental with a compassion that embraces differences in the Other. Our natural human desire for justice returns, however, in the dislike of the multiculturalists for those who insist on justice: *They* are the ones who must be excluded. Peacenik peace is not really for everybody as it claims.

The peace liberals have their counterpart in the Islamic fascists, who oppose peace as such, as if they were prepared to enter a perpetual war. It is not easy to reason with unreason, but let me try. They say that the West likes life and they like death, meaning that the West is given to peace because it is too attached to life. There is more than a little truth in this criticism, but again it goes too far. It implies that the Islamic fascists have a notion of justice, too, and therefore a notion of peace. They do not want merely to destroy and expel the West but also to replace it

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—after which there would be peace of a very different kind from that which we intend.

The distinction between friend and foe arises from human partiality, from our bias on behalf of our own. Because of our desire for justice we can never be content with partiality, but at the same time we can never overcome it. In our time we have those professing faith in enlightenment who want peace at any cost and those professing faith in Islam who want war on every occasion. What a spectacle for theory, what a problem for citizens.

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P.J. O'Rourke

Politics is evil. Ten years ago I thought politics was misguided. But the events of the past decade—indeed, of the past 10 or a dozen decades—have proven me wrong.

The sum and substance of politics was expressed in the 1860s by Nicholas Chernyshevskii, a prescient Russian radical: "Man is god to man." And politics violates the other nine commandments as well. Politics could hardly function without bearing false witness. Likewise, without taking the Lord's name in vain. This is especially true given that, in politics, the Lord who is so loosely sworn by is Mankind. In the modern era politics has taken the place of mere tyranny. The result has been more killing in one century than in all the preceding centuries combined. Covetousness and stealing define redistributive politics. Without redistribution politics would have no political support. Graven image is as good a name as any for the fiat money by which politics operates. Politics' insistence upon involvement in every human activity, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, is more anti-Sabbatarian than golf. The Social Security system is no way to honor thy father and thy mother. And as for adultery, there was, and there may be still, Bill Clinton.

To claim that one's political activities are the will of God is to worship Beelzebub, as Osama bin Laden has demonstrated. To loudly call for separation of church and state is to miss the point. Why is there never a call for separation of state and coven?

Even to be "politically informed and engaged" is probably to be of the devil's party. Tune in to that most politically informed and engaged network, NPR, and listen to the evident relish with which its newscasts and current events programs recount misfortune, inequity, and suffering worldwide. The unspoken gleeful message is, "More occasions for more politics!"

Conservatism is not without its own delight in misery. Witness our enjoyment of the junior senator from New York. Of course we cannot walk away from politics any more than we can take a hike from original sin. But the most important action of political conservatism is not to politic but to conserve—to save things, in particular people, to preserve them from evil, which is to say politics.

God has made us free men, sovereigns of our own affairs, and sole experts on minding our own business. We are endowed with an individual capacity to improve our understanding, better our circumstances, and laugh at Howard Dean. The purpose of conservatism is to guard the sovereignty and get out of the capacity's way.

Observe our national politics. Observe politics around the world. Observe politics through the ages. Does it look like God's handiwork? When it comes to having a role in politics, that would be the Other Fellow.

P.J. O'Rourke is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD *and author, most recently, of* Peace Kills *(Atlantic Monthly Press).*

John Podhoretz

Oh, Lord, the government shutdown of 1995. How I craved it. How utterly sure I was that it would reveal the naked political perfidy of the Clinton administration, which was resisting important entitlement reforms and spending restrictions that the nation surely wanted and certainly needed. And, like so many conservatives in Washington, how I had waited for the moment when, at last, there would be a true confrontation between the Big Spenders and the Rugged Individualists that would finally lift the veil of Beltway secrecy on the rottenness of the federal budget.

Oh, Lord, how wrong I was.

The political and social impact of the government shutdown was completely the reverse of what I had expected. For it was not Bill Clinton and the Democrats who were blamed for the shuttering of the government, but Newt Gingrich and the Republicans. Americans wanted the federal government up and running, and they didn't like the image (admittedly fed to them by the liberal media) of a petulant GOP having a temper tantrum because it couldn't get its way.

I learned one key political lesson from the calamitous confrontation in the fall of 1995, which is this: There is a huge divide in this country between people who follow

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politics closely, either as an avocation or a career, and the vast majority of Americans who don't. Following the seismic 1994 elections in which Republicans won 52 new seats and control of the House of Representatives for the first time in four decades—and in which the Senate went Republican as well—political people were sure that the balance of power in Washington had shifted decisively to Capitol Hill. The leading political figure in Washington was no longer the president, Bill Clinton. It was the new speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich.

Gingrich was one of those political people, as were all the people around him and all the people in the Washington press corps. But what he and I and everybody but Bill Clinton seemed to realize was this: In 1992, Bill Clinton had received 45 million votes across America. In 1994, Newt Gingrich had received 119,000 votes in a single district in Georgia. Though Clinton had taken only 43 percent of the vote in that election, and was not a particularly strong president, in direct person-to-person combat against Newt Gingrich he had an incomparably stronger hand to play.

Presidents always do, because that's how the Constitution was structured. Just as the Founders intended, representatives in the House speak for local interests in Washington, while senators speak for state interests. The idea that executive power could be exercised from Capitol Hill was the great delusion that gripped Washington following the 1994 elections. It was hubristic and immodest, and Republican politicians had their hats handed to them in ways that reverberate still. (Seen government spending numbers lately?)

It is the president, and the president alone, who serves as the representative of all the people in the nation. At a time of political crisis, nonpolitical people will gravitate toward the president and invest their faith in the presidency. Republicans learned this lesson again, to their sorrow, in the impeachment drama a few years later.

John Podhoretz, a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, *is a columnist for the* New York Post *and author, most recently, of* Bush Country.

Irwin M. Stelzer

"Regrets, I've had a few," sings Frank Sinatra. Lucky him: only a few. The editor's invitation to set down the issue or issues on which I have changed my mind is followed, mercifully, with an order to keep the apology to 500 words.

So herewith a generic apology, one that covers a multitude of errors: I have confused the ability to formulate sensible policy with the ability to implement it. Those, I now know, are two different things.

The Bush foreign policy, based on protecting America by encouraging the spread of democracy, and by taking the fight to the terrorists is, in conception, terribly attractive, especially when personified in its early days by the swashing of Don Rumsfeld's buckle.

Then came the implementation: the inability to stop the massive looting that followed the successful occupation of Iraq—you remember, the stuff that happens; the failure to provide our troops with the proper armor, a problem that persists to this day; the unwillingness to back tough talk with sufficient troops; the inability to keep the lights on and the air conditioners whirring in Baghdad.

The policy remains the right one, in my view, but I no longer confuse that with our ability—perhaps *willingness* is a better word—to implement it.

Then there is economic policy. Again, the right policy: tax cuts in the face of a recession, and long-term cuts to stimulate risk-taking and work. Unexceptional, to Reaganites and latter-day Keynesians alike. But, oh, the implementation. When a period of above-trend economic growth followed the brief recession, and additional revenues streamed into the Treasury's coffers, they were not used to restore balance to the federal budget. Instead, a spendthrift Congress and a veto-shy president proceeded to squander the proceeds, and more, on bridges to nowhere and subsidies for—get this—rich corn growers and profit-laden oil companies.

But Sinatra concludes his semi-lament on a high note: "I did it my way." Which brings me to Alan Greenspan, the soon-to-be-gone chairman of the Fed. Greenspan conceived a policy that set the nation on a path to sustainable, non-inflationary growth, and implemented it—and he did it his way, ignoring the inflation-targeters, the model-builders who think they can reduce policymaking to a set of equations, and the politicians who wanted him to raise interest rates faster, or not at all.

There's a lesson there, I suppose. If the person who can conceive a policy knows how to implement it—in Greenspan's case, sees a need for liquefying the financial system in the face of a crisis, and knows how to do it; and then decides on slowing the economy a bit, and knows how to tap on the brakes—all will be well. The president is great at policy conception, less good at taking the steps needed to see that conception through to birth and maturity.

Irwin M. Stelzer is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, *director of economic policy studies at the Hudson Institute, and a columnist for the* Sunday Times *(London).*

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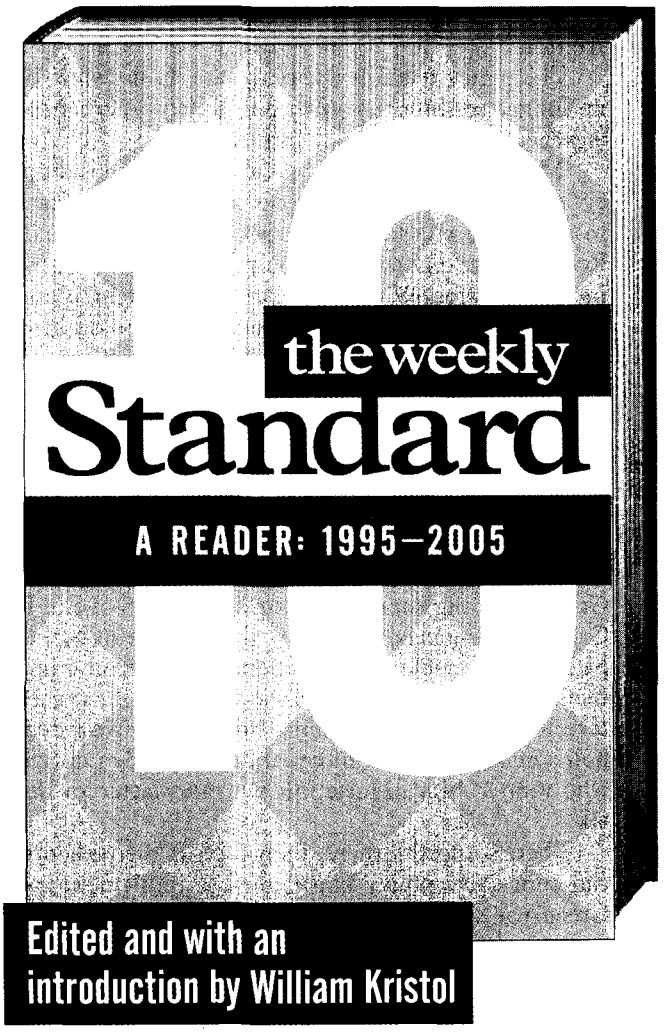

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Where the Twains Meet

America's novelist, prophet, cynic, philosopher, and romantic.

BY ERIC J. SUNDQUIST

Mark Twain, 1901

Bettmann / CORBIS

In 1880, Mark Twain earned, in today's dollars, nearly $5 million as a writer and stand-up comic. At the height of his popularity, he lived high on the hog. His swank Hartford home, sporting the city's first telephone, was stuffed with expensive bric-a-brac, its library adorned with metal leaf designed by Tiffany and Co. Twain craved adulation, milked every scrap of his life for profit, alternated between hits and flops, abused his friends, and flew into rages at publishers, patrons, and fans.

He was, in other words, a celebrity.

Indeed, argues Ron Powers in his rollicking new account of how the man born Samuel Clemens became the most recognizable figure of his era, Mark Twain was the first "rock star." Drawing on an array of sources, including newly available letters, Powers presents a portrait of Twain as engaging and detailed as we are ever likely to have, a worthy successor to the classic biography by Justin Kaplan, now 40 years in the past.

Mark Twain
A Life
by Ron Powers
Free Press, 736 pp., $35

Twain was born to write. He filled up scores of notebooks and penned, by some estimates, upwards of 100,000 letters, including 184 in courtship of his wife, Olivia Langdon. Whether in the golden evocation of his Tom Sawyer-like childhood in Hannibal, Missouri, or the vituperation of his harshest satire, he was capable of beautiful, timeless craftsmanship.

By the same token, much of his work was slapdash, and he was also a born huckster, as well known for his rambunctious stage performances and self-promotion as for his books. He was besieged by total strangers for editorial and financial assistance. (In reply to one woman's plea for money he advised that she commit suicide.) He worked hard to out-swindle those he accused of swindling him, poured money into crackpot schemes (most famously the ill-fated Paige Typesetting machine), and avoided total ruin

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only through the hard love of patient counselors. In a later era, he would have recognized the fortune to be made in sneakers, theme parks, and reality TV.

Twain forecast the contours of our own age because, in his outsized personality and homespun witticisms, half-sincere and half-satiric, he was thoroughly American. He seemed to arise in response to Walt Whitman's call, in *Leaves of Grass*, for a vernacular voice rough-hewn and energetic enough to embrace the great poem of the United States.

Like Whitman, Twain celebrated American cultural independence and took a skeptic's measure of democracy. His life from 1835 to 1910—he arrived with Haley's Comet and would go out with it, he accurately quipped—encompassed the nation's maturation as a global military and economic power, along with its failure to deliver on the promise of black emancipation. Along the East-West axis of manifest destiny and the North-South axis of the Mississippi River, the lifeline between slavery and freedom, Twain's imaginative geography spanned the country whose story he told.

Perhaps, as his mentor William Dean Howells put it, Twain is the "Lincoln of our literature." But the populist spirit and linguistic facility he shared with the president may also have served, in Twain's case, to repress his guilt about sitting out the Civil War. After deserting the Missouri State Guard—he "knew more about retreating than the man who invented retreating," he later wrote in "The Private History of a Campaign that Failed"—Twain followed his brother Orion to the Nevada Territory, where he exchanged his early career as a steamboat pilot for prospecting, gambling, carousing, and setting up as a newspaper writer and charismatic raconteur.

With one foot in the salon and the other in the saloon, as Powers describes his rise to fame in bohemian San Francisco, Twain mastered the art of releasing his punch-line, the "snapper," at just the right moment—and, when things were not going well, the art of the unfunny joke that, by virtue of its failure, became funny (his gift to later comedians such as Johnny Carson). By the time he delivered his notorious insults of the aged luminaries Ralph Waldo Emerson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, gathered for John Greenleaf Whittier's 70th birthday dinner in 1877—the first celebrity roast, Powers observes—Twain had breached stuffy New England culture and raised yarn-spinning, written as well as spoken, to a complex art.

Capitalizing upon the middlebrow literacy spread by the rapid multiplication of newspapers and book sales by subscription, Twain revolutionized one genre after another. On stage, he quickly eclipsed Artemus Ward, the most popular wit of the day. In print, he surpassed the backwoods sketches of Sut Lovingood, then the frontier regionalism of Bret Harte, then the travel writing of Bayard Taylor, and then the boy's adventure books of Horatio Alger. He even tried his hand at pornography in the mock-Elizabethan language of *1601*, a lark intended only for his friends.

Although his early books were composed largely from his newspaper travel "letters"—collected, padded, reshaped, honed, and padded some more (people wanted their money's worth in subscription books)—their true subject was Mark Twain himself, and irreverence was the rule. Whereas writers from Washington Irving to Henry James studied the Old World to test American exceptionalism, Twain slashed and burned his way through monarchies and antiquities with Yankee braggadocio. In *The Innocents Abroad*, based on his tour of Europe and the Holy Land, as well as its spin-off lecture, "The American Vandal Abroad," Twain's desecration of civilizations past, whether in literally hacking off souvenirs or in figurative scorn, announced the arrival of the tourist as ugly American.

But something other than philistinism was at work. As though governed by what Edgar Allan Poe called the "imp of the perverse," Twain early on displayed an antic, risk-taking impulse. In one newspaper sketch, as a means of exposing stock fraud in Nevada, he retailed a bloodsoaked hoax about the murder of his wife and seven children by a man who had been duped; in another, he claimed that the proceeds from a Carson City fundraiser were being diverted to a "Miscegenation Society" back east. Although Twain learned (and was forced) to censor himself, he never outgrew a penchant for thumbing his nose at propriety, so that mockery intended to draw a lesson frequently contended with contrary effects.

Twain's comedy, as Howells intuited, was an extension of his volatility, which in turn stemmed from roiling subcurrents of bitterness and anger. Rather than standing in the way of more serious artistry, Powers rightly argues, this paradox formed the essence of Twain's liberating genius, even as it left him exposed to charges, during his lifetime and all the more so a century later, that his work was compromised by vulgarity or political incorrectness.

Powers eschews psychobiography and, not without reason, belittles academic trends that have labored to explain (and often condemn) Twain by all manner of special pleading—the racist Twain, the closeted Twain, the post-colonialist-but-secretly-neo-colonialist Twain, and so forth. Some readers, however, will wish that Powers had pushed harder on the bedeviling force that underlay Twain's preoccupation with doubles, twins, and what he called his "dream self," the haunting alter ego he wrote into parables such as "A Mystery" in which, like Philip Roth in *Operation Shylock*, he is plagued by a dissolute impostor named Mark Twain, or "The Facts Concerning the Recent Carnival of Crime in Connecticut," in which he confesses to murdering his own conscience.

Nowhere was such doubleness of purpose more evident than in Twain's treatment of race. Excepting his jaundiced views of American Indians, Twain was no racist—just the reverse. He quietly financed the education of a black man attending Yale. He fulminated against racial vigilantism in a late essay entitled "The United States of Lyncherdom." And whether or not

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one is persuaded by recent arguments that Huck Finn's voice was modeled on that of a 10-year-old black boy Twain had sketched in 1874—as Powers reminds us, colloquial American language was already deeply inflected by African-American speech, certainly in the South—he wrote black dialect with loving care.

At the same time, Twain was not above employing "darky" humor in public and racially charged jokes in private. (Of Howells's favorable review of *Roughing It*, Twain remarked, "I am as uplifted & reassured by it as a mother who has given birth to a white baby when she was awfully afraid it was going to be a mulatto.") This habit grew from Twain's instinct to go for the jugular, but it was also the means by which he captured the central drama of post-Reconstruction history.

Powers provides an especially good account of the on-again, off-again composition of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and its intersection with Twain's nostalgic 1882 return to the Mississippi, which released him from a logjam in his novel's plot. Although he calls this the most exhilarating episode of Twain's life, Powers's treatment of both the trip and its resulting travelogue, *Life on the Mississippi*, is oddly truncated. Likewise, his analysis of Twain's masterpiece, while filled with sharply noticed details, is quite conventional. On the one hand, Powers recognizes that Huck's humbling of himself to Jim and his decision to "go to hell" rather than return Jim to slavery were something stunning and new in the national literature. On the other, he succumbs to the view that the concluding chapters, in which Huck and Tom Sawyer subject Jim to all kinds of prankish torments before revealing that he has already been set free by his dying owner, constitute a disabling flaw.

From T.S. Eliot onward, this problem has been endlessly debated but never solved, Powers frets. But the fact is that it was not meant to be solved. *Huckleberry Finn* is not great "despite" these chapters; and though it might be too much to say it is great "because of" them, the problem of setting a free man free, an abiding moral imperative for the nation and the novel alike (as Twain conceived it), has gotten lost in the opprobrium visited upon him by a generation of prim inquisitors.

A few years ago the novelist Jane Smiley weighed in. Having determined that *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* has "little to offer in the way of greatness," and that the novel's defenders, like the "villain" Twain, are prisoners of the white man's canon, Smiley advised reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin* instead. (So intimate was her engagement of Twain that Smiley, without its being noticed by her editors at *Harper's*, consistently misidentified the novel as *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.) Now, Harriet Beecher Stowe's polemic has many merits, but it is hardly subtle. All black and white, so to speak, and driven by emotional extortion, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is well suited to the age of racial grievance and the triumph of "feeling" as a cardinal aesthetic virtue—all the things *Huckleberry Finn* is not.

CORBIS / M. Schizlein

At the Twain homestead, Hannibal, Missouri, 1902

"No Huck and Jim, no American novel as we know it," Ralph Ellison argued in 1970. "For not only is the black man a co-creator of the language that Mark Twain raised to the level of literary eloquence, but Jim's condition as American and Huck's commitment to freedom are at the moral center of the novel." Like fellow black writers Toni Morrison, David Bradley, and Walter Mosely, among others, and unlike Jane Smiley, Ellison was not persuaded that Twain's use of the word "nigger" provides grounds for banning the book, or that contemporary African Americans are incapable of coming to terms with the normative prejudice of another era.

More to the point, these readers have understood that Huck's ethical victory is undermined by Tom's shenanigans for the same reason that the black rights guaranteed by the Civil War Amendments and the Civil Rights Act of 1875 were undermined by the refusal of legislatures and courts, both state and federal, to interdict racial discrimination and violence. Like *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, in which Twain transformed the changelings plot of *The Prince and the Pauper* into racial tragedy, the burlesque ending of *Huckleberry Finn* reflected the erosion of Fourteenth Amendment protections and the advent of what he considered the "second slavery" of Jim Crow, codified by *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* in 1896.

All the same, Twain was less a moralist than a fabulist—not to mention an opportunist—and his eagerness to crack wise, rather than be wise, must always be taken into account. In his time-travel novel *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, it is thus hard to tell if the democracy and industrial know-how that Hank Morgan imports into Arthurian England are in any way superior to medieval feudalism. Part carnival showman, part tyrant, Twain's hero ends up trapped in a bunker of enemy corpses created by his self-defeating technology of Gatling guns and electric fences.

Put differently, Twain, for all his greenhorn humor, was deeply pessimistic and no less cynical. His denunciations of injustice ebbed and flowed with his own fortunes. When he was wealthy, he lambasted those

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who would meddle with private property—"the communists & asinine government will go to work and smash it all," he warned—but having fallen into debt and clawed his way back to comfort (after nine penny-pinching years abroad and lecturing around the world), he railed against capitalism. In the meantime, money was money, and he cranked out frothy sequels such as *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, in which a minstrel-like Jim is thrilled to see the land of Moses from a hot-air balloon.

For this reason, among others, it is a mistake to enlist Twain in one or another ideological cause. Powers finds it instructive that he referred to United States military involvement in the Philippines as a "quagmire," and a recent scholar was delighted to uncover Twain's purported critique of the "capitalist as terrorist." But Twain's gloom ran deeper. Notwithstanding the intensity of his attacks on colonialism (as in *King Leopold's Soliloquy*) and imperialism (as in "To the Person Sitting in Darkness"), his doubt was absolute, his misanthropy universal. As he wrote in *Following the Equator*, "No tribe, howsoever insignificant, and no nation, howsoever mighty, occupies a foot of land that was not stolen."

Twain returned to the United States in 1900 and died, having outlived his only son, two of his three daughters, and his wife. His last works, many published posthumously, are set in a universe of blankness and fright where mysterious, corrupting figures visit their wrath upon the hapless, and familiar characters return in grotesque shapes. In *Letters from the Earth*, Satan proclaims his counter-Bible in eleven blasphemous epistles; in "Three Thousand Years Among the Microbes," a cholera germ named "Huck" lives parasitically in the veins of a drunken tramp as though in a heavenly cosmos.

After his lifelong defiance of most every conventional belief, Twain was left with nothing in which to believe but figments of his imagination. What remained was a body of literature at once dazzling and bleak, along with a life story to match. ♦

There Goes Da Judge

Joseph Crater vanished in 1930, and his mystery endures. **BY JACOB STEIN**

Judge Alexander Holtzoff served on the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia during the 1950s. He was not known for his sense of humor. However, he did smile whenever a lawyer cited as a persuasive precedent a case from one of the New York state courts. The judge was raised in New York City. He knew all about Tammany Hall's long-standing corrupt control over the New York state court judgeships, and the strange disappearance of Judge Joseph F. Crater, one of Tammany's own.

Vanishing Point
The Disappearance of Judge Crater and the New York He Left Behind
by Richard J. Tofel
Ivan R. Dee, 216 pp., $24.95

Judge Holtzoff's smile represented his uncertainty whether the lawyer was naive, or whether the lawyer was joking with the judge.

Richard J. Tofel uses Judge Crater's disappearance on August 6, 1930, as a pickup for bringing on stage a colorful cast of New York public figures during the 1920s and '30s. The cast includes Jimmy Walker, New York's darling roguish mayor, Judge Samuel Seabury, the self-righteous special prosecutor, Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, who presided over the burial of the old Democratic organization, and Franklin D. Roosevelt, the governor of New York who needed, but had no use for, Tammany Hall.

Judge Crater was an insignificant figure when he was alive, but his disappearance has given him as much ink as all the others. He attended Columbia Law School (as did Judge Holtzoff), then hooked up with Tammany Hall and got its support for an appointment to the New York State Supreme Court. While he was alive, Judge Crater was just another judge who, it was assumed, had friends at Tammany Hall. It was not until he disappeared that he became the public figure, the mythical figure, that he continues to be. Even now, police are combing through records and contemplating a new search based on a posthumous letter received recently by the NYPD from a woman who claimed her husband knew who murdered Judge Crater, and when and where he was buried.

The investigation into his disappearance had three working theories. First, Judge Crater had been murdered. Second, he had to get out of town because of his mounting personal problems. Third, he had committed suicide. After his disappearance, there were reports that he had been seen at various places, reports that turned out to be like the sightings of Elvis Presley in the Safeway long after he died. In Judge Crater's case, however, the mystery continues because he never was heard from again, and there was no *corpus delicti*.

In time, the newspapers made public everything there was to know about Judge Crater's bizarre personal life. It turned out that he had large, unexplainable bank accounts. He had connections with New York's criminal element. He had a fondness for Broadway showgirls, and he was on a first-name basis with Polly Adler, proprietor of an upscale Manhattan brothel and, subsequently, author of *A House Is Not a Home* (1953). The manipulation of his bank accounts gave rise to an inference that he was putting money in place to square things with Tammany Hall for getting him the judgeship.

The investigation of Tammany Hall led to Mayor Jimmy Walker. James J.

Jacob Stein practices law in Washington, D.C.

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Judge Joseph Crater

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Walker was the embodiment of New York in the Roaring Twenties. He was born in Greenwich Village in 1881. He first gained public notice as a songwriter. In 1908, he wrote "Will You Love Me in December As You Did in May?" It was an immediate smash hit. He played the piano. He had a passable singing voice, and he was quick with a wisecrack. He had a desire to show off. Despite these theatrical gifts, he decided to go to law school. Thereafter, he went into law practice and hooked up with Tammany Hall as a source of business. That connection brought him along in various political offices and to the State Senate. In 1925, Tammany ran him for mayor of New York. He won.

He, like Judge Crater, liked the company of showgirls. In the first year of his mayoralty, he commenced an affair with Betty Compton, star of *Oh, Kay!* (1926) and *Fifty Million Frenchmen* (1929). This affair, which became public, combined with Jimmy Walker's other problems, overlapped the ongoing Crater/Tammany Hall investigations conducted by Special Prosecutor Samuel Seabury.

Like Judge Crater, Jimmy Walker had unexplainable big-money bank accounts. In order to explain it, he had to resort to a variation of the so-called "little tin box defense." Thomas M. Farley, a Tammany insider, was sheriff of New York County in the early '30s. In the investigation of corruption that led to Walker's resignation, Judge Seabury discovered that Farley had deposited close to $400,000 in his bank accounts over a six-year period. His total salary for that time was $90,000.

Here is Seabury's cross-examination of Farley:

Question: "Where did you keep these moneys that you have saved?"

Answer: "In a safe deposit box at home in the house."

Question: "Whereabouts at home in the house?"

Answer: "In a big safe."

Question: "In a little box, in a big safe?"

Answer: "In a big box in a big safe."

Question: "And, Sheriff, was this big box that was safely kept in the big safe a tin box or a wooden box?"

Answer: "A tin box."

Question: "Kind of a magic box, wasn't it, Sheriff?"

Answer: "It was a wonderful box."

The 1959 musical *Fiorello!* has a clever song called "In a Little Tin Box."

After Mayor Walker was questioned by Judge Seabury, he appeared on the courthouse steps to meet his friends in the press. "Boys," he said, "I've learned you do three things in life alone. You are born alone. You die alone. And unfortunately, you testify alone." He changed this quotation when he heard a vaudevillian say that "the first time I opened my eyes in this world I found myself in bed with a strange woman." In later renditions Walker dropped "You are born alone" and substituted "You putt alone," accompanied by a Johnny Carson-style golf swing. He resigned as mayor in 1932 and took off for Europe with Betty Compton.

Bob Hope played the lead in the 1957 movie about Jimmy Walker called *Beau James*. It is a mistake to dismiss Hope as a mechanical joke-telling machine. Long before he adopted that role he was a talented song-and-dance man appearing in vaudeville and musical comedy between the wars. If you want to know what those days were really like, take a trip to the Library of Congress in Washington and visit the Bob Hope vaudeville exhibit, where you will find the stars performing on old restored film clips. You will see Eddie Cantor singing "Making Whoopee," which alone is worth the trip.

You might even get a glimpse of one or two of the showgirls who kept company with Judge Crater. ♦

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The Great Pretenders

How television animates the corridors of power.

BY MARTHA BAYLES

From Aristotle to Tocqueville, wise critics of democracy have noted that comedy debunks the high and mighty. Its targets are vanity, arrogance, moralism, and ambition: all the vices of power. So comedy is the natural vantage point from which to compare two remarkable television shows about contemporary democratic politics: America's *The West Wing* and Britain's *Yes, Minister.* Each of these shows has dominated an era and continues to attract a loyal following.

The West Wing is an hour-long dramatic series about a blue-blooded president, Josiah "Jed" Bartlet (Martin Sheen), and his senior staff, a group of blue-state workaholic dreamers, running a scandal-free (one is tempted to say Clinton-free) Democratic White House. *The West Wing* made its debut in 1999, and despite the departure of creator/writer Aaron Sorkin and director Thomas Schlamme in 2003, it is now in its sixth season on NBC. The first four seasons, by far the best, are available on DVD.

Yes, Minister is a half-hour sitcom about the tug-of-war between a reform-minded politician, the Rt. Hon. James Hacker (Paul Eddington), recently named Minister of Administrative Affairs, and his permanent secretary, the wily career civil servant, Sir Humphrey Appleby (Nigel Hawthorne). Written by Antony Jay and Jonathan Lynn, the 37 episodes of *Yes, Minister* and its sequel, *Yes, Prime Minister* (in which Hacker "fails upwards" to No. 10 Downing Street) aired on the BBC during 1980-87. They, too, are available on DVD.

Because *The West Wing* grew out of the "dramedy" genre (the executive producer, John Wells, is a veteran of *ER*), it includes both drama and comedy. And the early seasons can be very funny, especially when deflating busy, self-important people. For example, in one scene, deputy communications director Sam Seaborn (Rob Lowe) and deputy chief of staff Josh Lyman (Bradley Whitford) are striding through the corridor in one of the show's trademark "walk and talk" sequences (facilitated by the Steadicam and perfected on *ER*) when suddenly they realize that their purposefulness has no purpose:

> *Sam*: Where are you going?
>
> *Josh*: Where are you going?
>
> *Sam*: I was following you.
>
> *Josh*: I was following you. (*Pause*) All right, don't tell anyone this happened, okay?

Unfortunately, the laughs don't occur where they are most needed: during *The West Wing*'s many flights of moralistic rhetoric. We see this in the pilot episode, when President Bartlet makes his grand entrance. Waiting for him in the Mural Room are three staffers and three evangelical Christians. The mood is tense, and when one of the visitors mistakenly quotes the First Commandment as "Honor thy father," one of the staffers corrects her: "No it isn't . . . 'Honor thy Father' is the Third Commandment." It is typical of evangelicals in *The West Wing* to misquote the Bible for racist, sexist, and homophobic purposes, so we are not surprised when another asks, "Then what's the First Commandment?" At which point the president appears, flanked by Secret Service agents, and booming, "I am the Lord thy God! Thou shalt worship no other God before me!"

This is supposed to be a laugh line, but there's nothing amusing about Bartlet's own Mount Sinai-sized moralism. Announcing that his granddaughter has been receiving death threats from a militant pro-life group for making public "her feelings about a woman's right to choose," the president wheels on the elder evangelical: "You'll denounce these people, Al. You'll do it publicly. And until you do, you can all get your fat asses out of my White House."

In the wonderful world of family sitcoms, writers use the acronym MOS ("moment of s—t") to describe the sappy "I love you" endings the networks often require them to tack onto otherwise unsappy scripts. In the first three seasons of *The West Wing*, the typical MOS is a politically correct sermonette capping off a rapid-fire debate over some controversial issue in which the last word is invariably given to the left-liberal position. And in case your heart isn't warmed by the lesson, the music on the soundtrack will microwave it for you.

The current season of *The West Wing* has fewer MOSs; perhaps its defenses have finally been breached by American political reality. Bartlet is now a lame duck, and hoping to succeed him are a liberal Democrat (played preachily by Jimmy Smits) and a moderate Republican (played persuasively by Alan Alda). Between the two, the issues talk is more balanced than before. But absent the skills of Sorkin, Schlamme, and Lowe (a master at delivering Sorkin's ironic-pedantic lines), the debates over charter schools, gun control, and ethanol subsidies have lost whatever charm they once possessed and become an unholy cross between *Hannity & Colmes* and *ER*: shouting-head sound bites delivered at emergency-room speed.

Yes, Minister, by contrast, is witty and lucid throughout. It was Margaret Thatcher's favorite program, and even a Yank can see why. Rather than send politically correct messages, it sends up

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the whole political culture. Its ripest targets are not Labourites or Tories but the BBC, Foreign Office, Church of England, and (of course) civil service—all those venerable British perches from which upper-crust Oxbridge types look down upon scientists, engineers, and economists, never mind the daughters of Grantham shopkeepers. Broadcast during the 1980s, when the Thatcher government was endeavoring to harpoon the Whitehall Leviathan, the show's genius was to have the monster defended by the deliciously slithery Sir Humphrey:

> *Sir Humphrey*: Minister, I have something to say to you which you may not like to hear.
>
> *Hacker*: Why should today be any different?
>
> *Sir Humphrey*: Minister, the traditional allocation of executive responsibilities has always been so determined as to liberate the Ministerial incumbent from the administrative minutiae by devolving the managerial functions to those whose experience and qualifications have better formed them for the performance of such humble offices, thereby releasing their political overlords for the more onerous duties and profound deliberations which are the inevitable concomitant of their exalted position.
>
> *Hacker*: Now, whatever made you think I wouldn't want to hear that?
>
> *Sir Humphrey*: Well, I thought it might upset you.
>
> *Hacker*: How could it, when I didn't understand a single word? Humphrey, for God's sake, for once in your life put it into plain English!
>
> *Sir Humphrey*: If you insist. You are not here to run this Department.

For a while, *The West Wing* did something similar. During the first few seasons the best episodes focused not on the power struggle between left and right, Democrat and Republican, but on the elaborate game of leaks, access, favors, and spin played between the White House and the media. As American political parties have become weaker, presidents have become more dependent on the media to win popular support for their policies. So every administration, regardless of party, must now engage in a permanent public relations campaign. This is the show biz side of politics, and it is no accident that show biz people would do a brilliant job of depicting it.

Washington today is full of interns and young staffers who dream of becoming Josh Lyman, Sam Seaborn, or C.J. Cregg (Allison Janney), the tart-tongued, elegant press secretary recently promoted to chief of staff. These youthful aspirations are a tribute to Sorkin, whose stated purpose in creating *The West Wing* was to depict political people not "as dolts or Machiavellian" but as "dedicated," "well educated," even "heroic." Sorkin's hope was to make politics look glamorous and exciting. And he succeeded.

Reuters / CORBIS

President Bartlet and Vice President Gore

But there's a problem with Sorkin's "valentine to public service." In the same interview, he remarked, "There's a great tradition in storytelling that's thousands of years old, telling stories about kings and their palaces, and that's really what I wanted to do." Perhaps this explains why *The West Wing* glorifies the White House as the supreme seat of power. Indeed, for all the program's trumpeted concern for a democracy in which all voices are heard, it powerfully reinforces the American presidency's greatest ambition (and delusion): that it is possible for one individual to rise above the petty politics of bargaining and self-interest and embody the ancient ideal of the good king, the wise and virtuous ruler able to reach out to each of his subjects and, by force of personality, subdue all his enemies.

The United States is not a monarchy, of course. But the remnants of royalty still cling to the office of president, and if you think *The West Wing* rips these away, think again. Despite its irreverence, Jed Bartlet's White House is a deeply traditional, almost courtly place, where protocol is observed, ritual revered, and the full pageantry of office carried to blood-stirring heights. Every detail of the production, from the stylish clothes to the sumptuous decor to the artful lighting, impresses the lowly couch potato with the majesty and power of the president, and the courage, grace, and high IQs of the lords and ladies who serve at his pleasure.

Those high IQs are key because, despite *The West Wing*'s royal trappings, it hardly affirms the divine right of kings or the prerogatives of aristocracy. In this American palace, the source of legitimacy is not lineage or birth (although some fuss is made about Bartlet's descent from Josiah Bartlett, signatory to the Declaration of Independence), it is brains. The staff do not just have experience and savvy, they have Ivy League degrees and gilt-edged résumés. Bartlet himself is not just an economist, he's a Nobel Prize-winning economist—and a polymath to boot, whose pedantry on scientific, historical, and literary topics is affectionately mocked but also emulated.

Given the relentless dumbing-down of nearly everything on American television these days, including politics, it is hard to complain about this. But there is something grating about Sorkin's declaration that politics is ultimately "about smart or stupid,

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Prime Minister Hacker

Everett Collection

about engaged or not, qualified or not."

The contrast with *Yes, Minister* is telling. Jim Hacker is not stupid, but intellectually he is no match for Sir Humphrey. Moreover, Hacker's degree from the London School of Economics places him socially a notch below Sir Humphrey, not to mention below his own Personal Private Secretary Bernard Woolley (Derek Fowlds), the very model of a career civil servant with an Oxbridge First in classics.

As the junior man serving both Hacker and Sir Humphrey, the wry, observant Bernard is very much the arbiter of their contest. Throughout the first series, when Hacker is merely minister for administrative affairs, Sir Humphrey wins every round. So Bernard remains Sir Humphrey's loyal apprentice in the fine arts of keister protection, bureaucratic obfuscation, and house-training dim-witted politicians. As for Hacker, Bernard's way of assisting him is usually to assist him to stay in his place. For example, when the newly appointed Hacker inquires about office furniture, Bernard says, "It used to be said that there were two kinds of chairs to go with two kinds of minister. One sort folds up instantly, and the other sort goes round and round in circles."

In the second series, Hacker is chosen as prime minister because his party cannot decide between two strong candidates and sees him as ineffectual and therefore safe. But after plenty of folding up and going round in circles, he actually steadies into the seat of power. In the episode called "The Key," a squabble erupts between Hacker's political adviser, Dorothy Wainwright (Deborah Norton), and Sir Humphrey over some prime office space in Number Ten. Dorothy wants the space for her office because, in addition to being centrally located, it is opposite the "gents' loo," allowing her to eavesdrop on important conversations. But Sir Humphrey wants it for an additional waiting room, because, as he explains:

> People who arrive before other people must wait where they cannot see other people who arrive after them being admitted before them. And people who come in from outside must wait where they cannot see the people from inside coming in to tell you what the people from outside are coming to see you about. And people who arrive when you are with people they are not supposed to know you have seen, must wait somewhere until the people who are not supposed to have seen you have seen you.

Inspired by Dorothy's example, Hacker decides that he, too, can stand up to Sir Humphrey. So he orders Bernard to confiscate the key that allows Sir Humphrey free access to Number Ten. At first Bernard resists, but seeing Hacker act prime-ministerial, he relents and is soon collaborating in the humiliation of his superior. The hilarity peaks when a desperate Sir Humphrey tries to break in through a window, and sets off the alarm. Finally, Hacker has won! And the joy of the victory is more infectious than any celebrated in the Bartlet White House, for the simple reason that Hacker does not preen about how much brainier he is than Sir Humphrey.

Another of Hacker's triumphs is over the Foreign Office, who react with their usual smugness to the threat of a Marxist takeover of a tiny island in the Indian Ocean. In one of many hilarious set pieces about the British Establishment, the fair-haired, plummy foreign secretary Sir Richard Wharton (Donald Pickering) joins Sir Humphrey in explaining to Bernard how the system works:

> *Sir Richard*: Standard Foreign Office response in a time of crisis. In Stage One we say that nothing is going to happen.
>
> *Sir Humphrey*: Stage Two, we say something may be going to happen but we should do nothing about it.
>
> *Sir Richard*: Stage Three, we say that maybe we should do something about it, but there's nothing we can do.
>
> *Sir Humphrey*: Stage Four, we say maybe there is something we could have done, but it's too late now.

Soon Hacker realizes that, as prime minister, he is in a position to go over the heads of Sir Humphrey, Sir Richard, and the rest of their claret-swilling brethren. So he invites the Israeli ambassador round for a drink, and after consulting with him, orders 800 fully armed British paratroopers to the island on a "goodwill visit." When Sir Humphrey blusters, "There's an airborne battalion in the air!" Hacker calmly replies, "Sounds like the right place for it." No power trip here, just a subtle reminder of who is, or ought to be, in charge.

You will not find such subtlety in *The West Wing*. On the contrary, the Bartlet White House is never so power-drunk as when whipping up an imaginary international crisis. Some critics have accused the show of being evasive, because it has never dealt directly with September 11. But really, this is prudent. Right after the attacks, the producers aired a special episode in which a security lockdown traps Bart-

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let's staff in the White House Mess with a group of high school students. The threat turns out to be baseless, but that doesn't stop the staffers from spending an hour enlightening their young visitors (and us) about the historical roots of terrorism. Poorly written and acted, this episode was so bad, you could call it an HOS. It may explain why the show has maintained a certain distance from real events ever since.

Yet this distance has not prevented *The West Wing* from pulling out all the stops when portraying incidents of domestic terrorism (Season One), hostage-taking (Season Two), covert assassination (Season Three), kidnapping (Season Four), and suicide bombing (Season Five). In these episodes the lighting, already theatrical, becomes *chiaroscuro*; the music, already grandiose, becomes Wagnerian; and the commander in chief, already virtuous, becomes the kind of leader who hands down the law after spending forty days on a mountaintop. It is all so glorious, it makes you grateful that Hollywood does not work directly for the government.

Horace once advised the playwright: "Put the elements together / In just the right way; such is the power of making / A perfectly wonderful thing out of nothing much." By this standard, *Yes, Minister* is a classic. Taking a few simple ingredients—an ordinary politician, a manipulative bureaucrat, and an overqualified apprentice—it mixes them into a comic masterpiece that (if preserved) will last as long as politicians and bureaucrats walk the earth.

But perhaps the palm should go to *The West Wing* for offering more elevated characters and making politics look more romantic? It would be tempting to dismiss this romanticism as uniquely liberal, the product of envious Democrats banished from the Rose Garden. But more likely it is American, the product of understandable impatience with the mundane machinations of this country's form of government. If Republicans were to produce their own version, I strongly suspect that it, too, would be suffused with muffled drums, golden sunbeams, rippling red-white-and-blue graphics, and a touching faith that this administration will bring out the better angels of our nature.

So let us thank the British for *Yes, Minister*. In that low-budget production, with its tacky sets and lighting cold as a London winter afternoon, virtue resides not in individuals but in institutions—the institutions of liberal democracy that, for all their faults, do allow for the occasional victory by ordinary elected representatives of the people. This is not very romantic, and usually one is too busy laughing to notice that something important is being said. But it is well worth noticing, because democracy cannot thrive on sunbeams and the better angels of our nature. It must accommodate gray days and worse angels, or else turn into something all too recognizably undemocratic. ♦

Eliot's Last Joke

Literary archaeology unearths a castle in Somerset.

BY PHILIP TERZIAN

Not long ago I stumbled upon what I would guess to be an undiscovered piece of T.S. Eliot ephemera—an obscure bone from the corpus, as it were—and have spent the past few years contemplating its announcement. It is obviously too unimportant to be included in any sort of biographical work or critical study, or stuffed between the pages of professional journals. And yet it is not altogether insignificant, either: a trivial incident, a peek behind the curtains, a throwaway line that reminds us of something we already know.

Perhaps it is best to explain the origins of its discovery. We begin some 35 years ago. I was an undergraduate at the time, majoring in English, and one afternoon two cherished fixations of mine crossed paths. I was in a secondhand bookstore (that's the first one) and came across a trove of discarded *Social Registers* (that's the other one). I should say, in my defense, that this interest in *Social Registers*, slightly diminished since then, was primarily sociological. Like the late Prof. E. Digby Baltzell of the University of Pennsylvania, I have a certain fascination with the folkways of the American upper-middle and upper classes. And, from my vantage point as a student on Philadelphia's Main Line, I had the occasion to observe the natives, from time to time, in their natural habitat.

One such place was the bookstore in question, called The Owl—now, sadly, gone. Located in a Victorian carriage house at the edge of the Bryn Mawr College campus, it was run by the alumnae and was, as such things go, a pretty good shop. Its stock was an instructive combination of academic titles and the sort of middlebrow fare that Bryn Mawr graduates, and their husbands, cherished in that era: Books-of-the-Month, Literary Guild selections, the novels of Erich Maria Remarque and Dorothy Canfield Fisher, the popular histories of Claude Bowers and Catherine Drinker Bowen (a local resident). The stock was spread through two floors and assorted rooms of eccentric design, thick with dust, and it had just enough turnover to justify regular visits. I was not exactly flush with cash in those days; but then again, the antiquarian book dollar went further in 1971.

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A portion of the pleasure, I confess, was the clerks. All Bryn Mawr women, I judged from their appearance that they had probably graduated during the Twenties—perhaps were classmates of Katharine Hepburn '28—and I happily eavesdropped on their conversations. Sensibly dressed, devoid of makeup or traces of vulgarity, their square-jawed voices and nasal intonation were pure entertainment to a visiting Marylander. To which was added a favorite ritual.

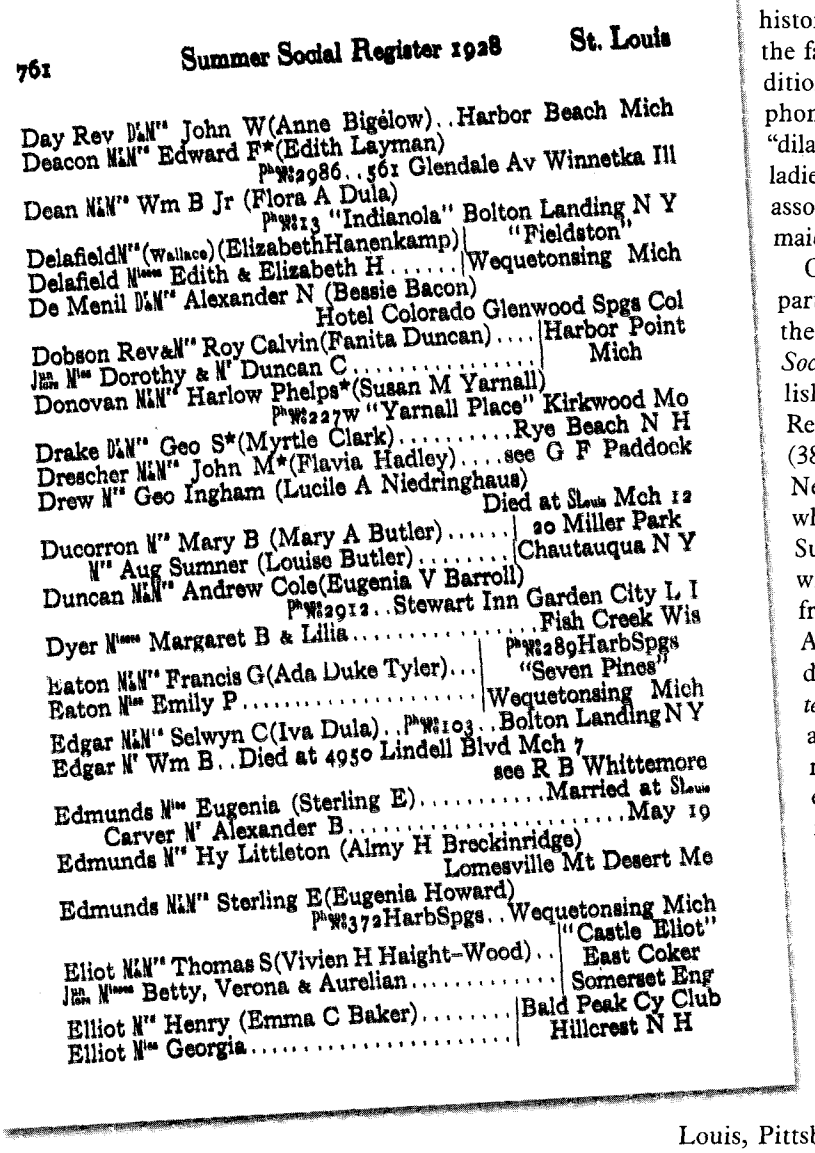
When I had ceased browsing, and presented my selection of treasures for purchase, they would carefully record each title in a log. This was a more complicated process than it sounds and, combined with the business of adding up prices and calculating the Pennsylvania sales tax, the speed of commerce was drastically slowed down.

Then, too, there was the polite, if slightly discomfiting, process of commenting on titles. I remember, once, when I bought an edition of George Moore's *Memoirs of My Dead Life*, the inscription recorded that a previous owner had acquired it "on leave, London, 1944." While the woman behind the desk was admiring the book, I mentioned this interesting tidbit—which she managed to misunderstand, as I should have guessed, to the effect that *I* had been on leave in London during the war.

In any event, the final ritual was invariable. Once the mathematical problems had been solved, the confusions straightened out, and the books had been enclosed in a wrinkled shopping bag, the woman would look up from her desk, smile benevolently, and ask if I were a student at Haverford College. I would smile in return, and respond: "Oh no, I go to Villanova."

Alas, this was not what they expected, or wanted, to hear. Some of them, to their credit, kept on smiling; but more frequently than not they would literally rear back—like a horse stung by a bee—and grope for words that wouldn't come. At that instant, of course, a lifetime's breeding kicked in, and our transaction would end on a cordial note. But their nerves had manifestly been shattered.

The *Social Registers*, as I say, were acquired during those years and, for the most part, still adorn my library (reference section). When I am asked what fascination they exert, I am quick to answer: In each volume are a hundred minor novels. In the course of three or four generations you can track the decline and fall of certain clans, trace the multiple marriages of yachtsmen and bond traders, revive café society, find historic names, learn the favored clubs, traditional schools, telephone numbers, and "dilatory domiciles" of ladies and juniors and assorted "married maidens."


761 Summer Social Register 1928 St. Louis

Day Rev D&M[rs] John W(Anne Bigelow)..Harbor Beach Mich
Deacon M&M[rs] Edward F*(Edith Layman)
Ph[ne]:2986..561 Glendale Av Winnetka Ill
Dean M&M[rs] Wm B Jr (Flora A Dula)
Ph[ne]:13 "Indianola" Bolton Landing N Y
Delafield M[rs](Wallace)(ElizabethHanenkamp) | "Fieldston"
Delafield M[Miss] Edith & Elizabeth H..... | Wequetonsing Mich
De Menil D&M[rs] Alexander N (Bessie Bacon)
Hotel Colorado Glenwood Spgs Col
Dobson Rev&M[rs] Roy Calvin(Fanita Duncan).... | Harbor Point
Jun M[Miss] Dorothy & M[r] Duncan C..... | Mich
Donovan M&M[rs] Harlow Phelps*(Susan M Yarnall)
Ph[ne]:227w "Yarnall Place" Kirkwood Mo
Drake D&M[rs] Geo S*(Myrtle Clark).....Rye Beach N H
Drescher M&M[rs] John M*(Flavia Hadley)....see G F Paddock
Drew M[rs] Geo Ingham (Lucile A Niedringhaus)
Died at St Louis Mch 12
Ducorron M[rs] Mary B (Mary A Butler)..... | 20 Miller Park
M[rs] Aug Sumner (Louise Butler)..... | Chautauqua N Y
Duncan M&M[rs] Andrew Cole(Eugenia V Barroll)
Ph[ne]:2912..Stewart Inn Garden City L I
Dyer M[Miss] Margaret B & Lilia.....Fish Creek Wis
Eaton M&M[rs] Francis G(Ada Duke Tyler)... | Ph[ne]:289HarbSpgs
Eaton M[Miss] Emily P..... | "Seven Pines"
Edgar M&M[rs] Selwyn C(Iva Dula)..Ph[ne]:103..Bolton Landing N Y
Edgar M[r] Wm B..Died at 4950 Lindell Blvd Mch 7
see R B Whittemore
Edmunds M[Miss] Eugenia (Sterling E).....Married at St Louis
Carver M[r] Alexander B.....May 19
Edmunds M[rs] Hy Littleton (Almy H Breckinridge)
Lomesville Mt Desert Me
Edmunds M&M[rs] Sterling E(Eugenia Howard)
Ph[ne]:372HarbSpgs..Wequetonsing Mich
Eliot M&M[rs] Thomas S(Vivien H Haight-Wood).. | "Castle Eliot"
Jun M[Miss] Betty, Verona & Aurelian..... | East Coker Somerset Eng
Elliot M[rs] Henry (Emma C Baker)..... | Bald Peak Cy Club
Elliot M[Miss] Georgia..... | Hillcrest N H

One volume of particular interest is the 1928 *Summer Social Register*, published by the Social Register Association (381 Fourth Avenue, New York City), which "contains the Summer Address where it differs from the Winter Address of . . . residents." Most *Registers* are confined to a single city, but my 1928 Summer edition lists the mountain lodges, shore homes, boat houses, and lakefront cottages of the assorted aristocracies of New York, Washington, Philadelphia, Chicago, Boston, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Cincinnati & Dayton, San Francisco, Baltimore, and Buffalo. (No Southern cities, the reader will note.)

A few years ago, as I gazed at this comprehensive list, it occurred to me that the St. Louis section might reveal some interesting detail about the family of T.S. Eliot, who was born there in 1888, and whose mother was still alive at the time of publication. The ancestral Eliots had been New Englanders,

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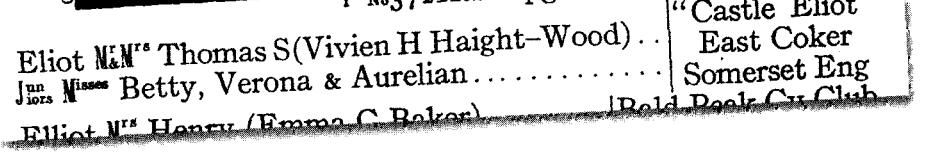
and the midwestern branch spent their summers at Gloucester, Massachusetts; but St. Louis hovers in Eliot's poetry, as does the neighboring Mississippi River ("a strong brown god—sullen, untamed and intractable"). So I was not entirely surprised to find T.S. Eliot himself, more than a dozen years after he had left America for England, listed among the *Register*'s dilatory denizens.

I was surprised, and delighted, however, to see what was printed (*see below*). Eliot had, in fact, been married to Vivien Haigh-Wood (not Haight-Wood) for a dozen years. But they had no children, much less three daughters named Betty, Verona, and Aurelian. And there was certainly no Castle Eliot in East Coker, Somerset, to which the poet and his wife repaired. I had, by inadvertence, found an Eliot joke, a mildly elaborate piece of satire at the expense of the Social Register Association of New York City and, I suppose, the burghers of St. Louis.

T.S. Eliot, 1919

CORBIS



The daughters' names, I assume, are of no particular significance, except the humor of their ascending distinction—from proletarian Betty through Verona to classical Aurelian—and the comic-sonorous sound they make together. There was an Emperor Aurelian in the latter stages of the Roman Empire, and Verona, of course, is where Romeo met Juliet. But the poet, not the historian, is at work here.

Similarly, while it is true that Andrew, the first Eliot in America, migrated from East Coker in the West Country to colonial Massachusetts in the late seventeenth century, he was a Dissenter, and town clerk, and certainly not the lord of any manor ("Castle Eliot"). No doubt, T.S. Eliot was mindful of his forebears, and conscious of East Coker—where his ashes would be buried in the parish church 40 years later. But, to my knowledge, he never visited the place until 1937, and "East Coker" in *Four Quartets* was published in 1940.

All in all, a mildly amusing, but not hilarious or particularly original, fragment of historic sarcasm. It is not especially difficult to lampoon a 1928 *Summer Social Register*, and Castle Eliot has the mock-grandiose tone of Phlebas the Phoenician and J. Alfred Prufrock.

What intrigues me is the chronology. The middle 1920s was a complicated period for T.S. Eliot. In 1927, the year before the *Register* was published—the year, presumably, when he filled out the form—he had renounced his American citizenship to become a British subject, and been baptized and confirmed in the Church of England. His marriage was a source of constant tension and anxiety, and friends were disturbed by his breakdowns and torment. Yet just as he embraced British nationality, and the English national church, his status as a literary colossus kept growing, and he settled comfortably into a lifetime's work as publisher (at Faber & Faber) and arbiter of letters as editor of the *Criterion*.

So Eliot's state of mind remains a mystery, cloaked by reticence and deliberate obscurity. But Old Possum appears to have lurked near the surface, the squire of Castle Eliot and his three adoring daughters. ♦

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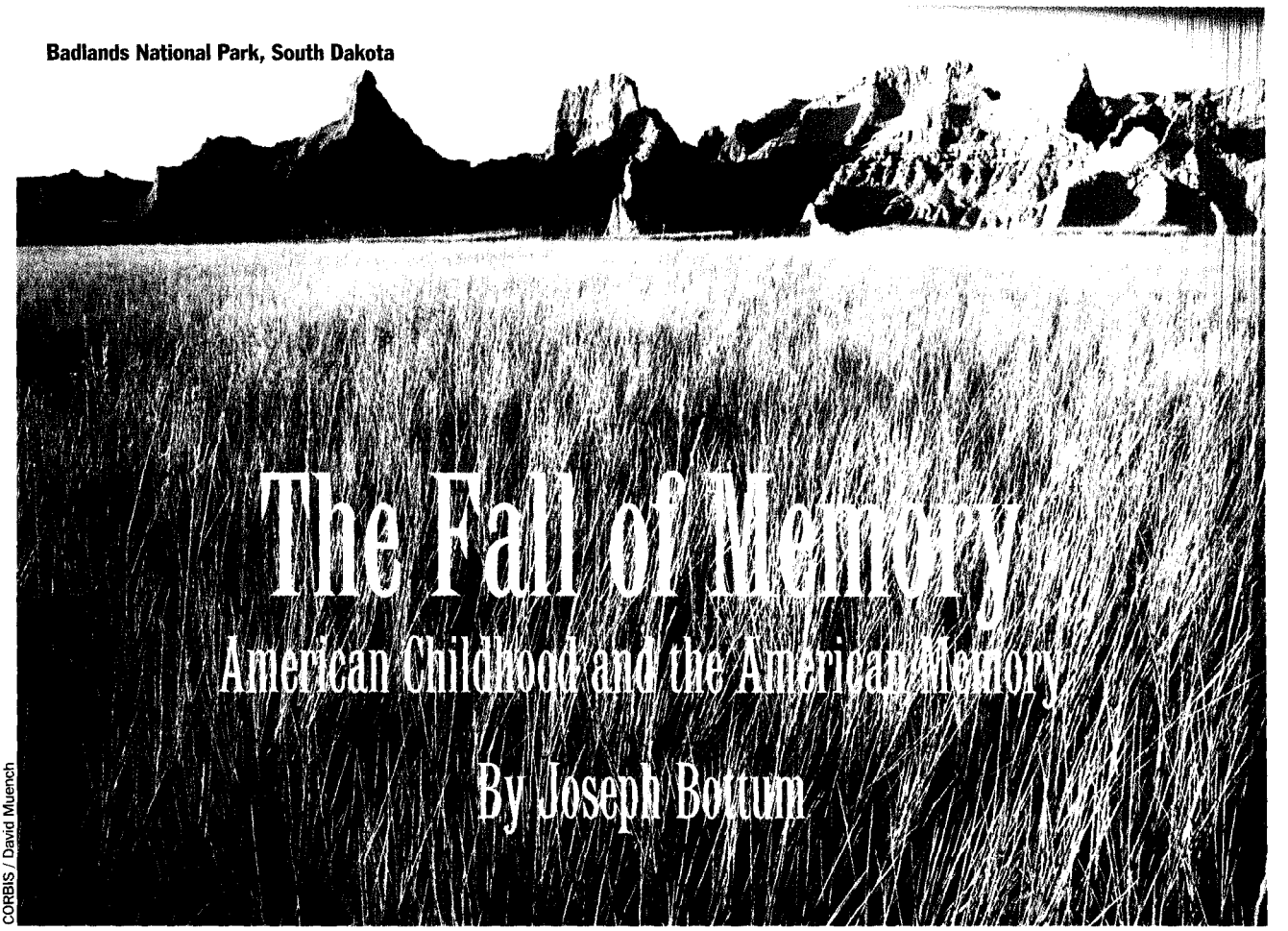
Badlands National Park, South Dakota



CORBIS / David Muench

The Fall of Memory

American Childhood and the American Memory

By Joseph Bottum

When I long for escape, I dream of the prairie. The last time I was out west, visiting my childhood home in Pierre, South Dakota, I drove up to one of the river hills on the edge of town. Why is the sun so much bigger out on those plains than it is back east? Sitting on the warm hood of the car to watch the huge orange sunset beyond the Missouri, I thought: *Here* is where I ought to be, *here* is where I should stay.

Back east, out west, up north, down south: Our geographical prepositions have come adrift. Some memory of their grandparents' arrival in the Dakotas, some last lingering sense of the westward course of history since Columbus, made my parents insist we say "back east" and "out west." *Back* was civilization, the old country, the origin. *Out* was the frontier, the undiscovered country, the goal.

In her early books about a child's life on the frontier, Laura Ingalls Wilder tells of her family's wanderings from a log cabin in the big woods of Wisconsin, to a little house on the prairie in southern Kansas, and on to a sod dugout on the banks of Minnesota's Plum Creek. Her later volumes, however, chronicle her pioneer girlhood once her parents had settled down permanently, in a farmhouse near De Smet, South Dakota. And when an old Kansas neighbor visits on his way out to the new territory opening up in Montana, the teenaged Laura cries that her family should be moving west, too.

"'I know, little Half-Pint,' said Pa, and his voice was very kind. 'You and I want to fly like the birds.'"

But for me, east is where I flew away to, and west is back toward home. When I think about abandoning the life I have these days, I imagine living on one of those dry Dakota buttes overlooking the river, alone with my family, miles from the nearest neighbor—a final refuge from the noise and rush, a perpetual anti-Washington, anti-New York, anti-East, forever set apart and free.

Then I shake myself awake and remember that I'd probably starve to death attempting it. Perhaps my dreams of the prairie are merely the standard-issue reveries in which settled people imagine they might somehow throw off their responsibilities and make a change. Perhaps they're merely daydreams of difference: the perpetual illusion that life might be lived down some entirely other path, the always-shimmering mirage that promises we can find what our spirits are missing simply by relocating our tired bodies.

But there is also a current in the mind that seems, inevitably, to pull fantasies about the future down into the dangerous eddies of the past. I know that what we might call "second innocence"—our grown-up goodness, our adult perfection, if we could ever reach it—will have to be something different from the first innocence we knew as children. What we lost when we were young is not what we should seek when we are old. I know all that—and yet, the logic of human imagination always joins what might be with what has already been: every possible future somehow dependent on the

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past. Anyone can cure a patient's neurosis, an old psychoanalysts' joke runs. All you have to do is travel back in time and change the way his parents and grandparents were treated as children.

"It's in vain to recall the past unless it works some influence upon the present," Betsy Trotwood warns the young hero of *David Copperfield*. Sound advice, but the damaged boy, Charles Dickens's most autobiographical character, cannot take it. We do so much in vain, attempting with memory to repair the broken past—as though we might arrange thereby a perfect future, as though the Eden we lost at the beginning is the same as the Heaven we must find at the end. In looking back we perform a kind of simulated eavesdropping: a listening-in, as adults, on what we experienced as children; but this time, we imagine, with understanding. This time, getting it right.

So, what's a memoirist to do? Every human situation, Epictetus once warned, is like a vase with two handles: If you have quarreled with your brother, you can grasp the handle which is the fact that you have quarreled, or you can grasp the handle which is the fact that he is your brother.

For more than a decade now, America has seen the publication of innumerable memoirs and lightly fictionalized accounts of childhood. Books like Mary Gordon's *The Shadow Man*, Lois Gould's *Mommy Dressing*, Kathryn Harrison's *The Kiss*, Mary Karr's *The Liars' Club*, Jamaica Kincaid's *My Brother*, Jacki Lyden's *Daughter of the Queen of Sheba*, Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes*, and Michael Ryan's *Secret Life*—they appeared in such a ceaseless stream that even professional book reviewers felt flooded by them, and half the New York literary crowd swore they'd never read another, no matter what former best friend wrote it.

What's interesting, however, is that all these books are gripping accounts, beautifully told, of strangeness, peculiarity, and unpleasantness. And they are all deeply determined to be *revelatory*, as though the truth that hides beneath memory's evasions can be uncovered only by grasping Epictetus's handle: the quarrel of daughters with their mothers, of human beings with their existence.

Some 60 years ago, America suffered through a similar run of memoirs and lightly fictionalized books about childhood, from Betty Smith's Irish Catholic *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* to Sydney Taylor's Jewish *All-of-a-kind Family*, to say nothing of Wilder's eight *Little House on the Prairie* volumes. It is unfair, of course, to lump these books together. Clarence Day's *Life with Father*, published in 1935, was wry about being a child back in the 1890s. But the Gilbreth children's *Cheaper by the Dozen*, unabashedly Victorian in its worship of a dominating paterfamilias, seems oddly more old-fashioned than Clarence Day's story, though it was published a decade later.

Still, however much the old memoirs and novels of American childhood varied from one another, they had certain things in common: a similarity of conceit, a determination to be generally pleased with the past, only one handle picked in the choice of Epictetus. Does anyone still read these forgotten bestsellers? Bellamy Partridge's *Country Lawyer* and its sequel, *Big Family*, about being a lawyer's son in upstate New York? Hartzell Spence's *One Foot in Heaven* and its sequel, *Get Thee Behind Me*, about being a preacher's son on the Methodist circuit in Iowa?

Though often dismissed as unbearably sentimental, the earlier American memoirs are not, in truth, much more sentimental than their later counterparts. Both typically accept the old family picture of larger-than-life parents dominating the adult writer's memory of childhood. The newer books differ mostly by calling this a bad thing. In her 1997 memoir *The Shadow Man*, Mary Gordon seems to believe that by being *anti*-sentimental about her father she will achieve the accuracy of the *un*-sentimental, as though black-tinted lenses see better than rose-tinted ones.

There is some dispute about who coined the description of bad biographies as adding a "new terror to death." It may have been John Arbuthnot, describing the torrent of miserable, catchpenny books that 18th-century publishers issued immediately upon the death of anyone famous, or it may have been a 19th-century lawyer, reviewing John Campbell's extremely peculiar Victorian series, *Lives of the Lord Chancellors*. Regardless, the phrase ought to have been reserved for the way deceased parents are treated in many of the recollections of childhood published in the last few years. Who would risk bringing up literary children, if the reward were those children's adding this new terror to their parents' deaths?

A few years ago, reviewing a mild memoir by a woman who had adopted a disturbed boy, Richard Howard wrote: "I must acknowledge an interest, or rather a dismay, in discussing this 'family memoir,' for from experience and observation I have come to regard the American Nuclear Family in the last 50 years as the enemy of individual determination, of personal autonomy—in short, as a disease."

It hardly seems necessary to point out that the old style of memoir held the opposite: Family was not the disease, but the cure. Probably that's why most of those accounts of pre-World War II childhood were determined never to grasp the handle of the quarrel.

Believing the moral order interwoven with the facts of the physical universe, memoirs like Kathryn Forbes's *Mama's Bank Account* (1943) imagine that suppressing everything personally unpleasant about parents is *truer* to reality—simply for being the moral thing to do in a world in which morality itself is true. Believing facts utterly divorced from the values of the moral order, memoirs like Lois Gould's *Mommy Dressing* (1998) hold that accurate reporting of the unpleasant is the more honest thing to do, at least in part because the very fact of the unpleasantness loudly proclaims the honesty of the reporter.

There is something self-serving in either form, of course. For that matter, the whole idea of writing a memoir serves a doubtful purpose. Autobiographies are rarely undertaken by the humble or the shy. But compelled to choose, we should pick, I suppose, the

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old style as the more honorable. Every memoir of childhood is necessarily overshadowed by parents, and I imagine I could find, were I to turn my mind that way, a few stories of my father's madness, his drinking, his pretension, his bounce.

But my father, being dead, is not here either to be triumphed over by my telling those stories, or to defend himself against them. The death of parents leaves their honor in their children's hands, and the cruel accuracies we might fling in anger against the living seem even more wrong to use against the dead.

Memory may be our best tool for self-understanding, but only when we remember how weak a tool it really is: prone to warping under the narrative drive of storytelling, vulnerable to self-interest, susceptible to outside influence.

Here, for example, is a memory: To visit that hard South Dakota country in which I grew up is to recognize what price the homesteaders had to pay, for each town was claimed from the plains, grave by grave. Inside are carefully planted trees and tended hedges, small square parks, right-angled corners with stop signs and streets laid out true to the compass: an aiming at an ordered life. Outside lies the wilderness: not the manicured wilderness of postcard rain forests and picturesque mountain peaks, but the real thing.

In most of my recollections of the prairie, the wind is blowing. Sheltered down between the river hills—picking chokecherries for jam with my grandmother in the hollows by the cemetery, or crawling with my friends through the gullies left by the flash floods—we felt it less. But out on the giants' dancing plain, the wind seemed never to stop. Sometimes in the fall the family would go rock collecting on the buttes north of town, looking for agots to tumble in the rock polisher we got for Christmas when I was six or seven. And I always wondered that my mother and father, even my sisters, didn't seem to hear how much the dry wind was filled with hate, stunting the trees and twisting the scrub, gouging at anything that stood up right, scaling our skin and eyes, screeching in our ears cruelties and obscenities just beyond the edge of hearing. I always came home sick and trembling.

Except, of course, that the wind often wasn't north-northwesterly, grinding down against us from the Canadian plains. Leaping from a particular moment to some great universal claim about the way things *always* were, memory is false, even when it's true—maybe especially when it's true, maybe especially at the moment we think we've finally gotten the story right.

Partly, I imagine, that comes from the universal decay of reality that happens when we begin a story about the past, for everything runs a little smoother in the telling than it did in the living. I have a theory I sometimes put to friends late at night, and it goes like this: Each time you tell a story, it loses 10 percent of whatever truth it still had left in it.

The first time you explain what happened, the story is probably around 90 percent in contact with reality. It's also not much of a story. It lacks a sharp beginning, sags in the middle, and sputters out to a weak conclusion. So, without really meaning to, just obeying the internal logic of storytelling, you sand it off a little when you go over it again. You leave out what have come to seem the extraneous bits, you make your own role perhaps a little more central than it appeared the first time around, and you let stand out a shade more clearly the especially comic or dramatic moments.

And thus the tale loses, in its second telling, 10 percent of that 90 percent of the first telling. Tell a story 10 or 12 times, and it's only a third true. Tell a story 50 times, and the accuracy plummets down pretty close to zero—*pretty close*, but never quite reaching the absolute zero of pure fiction.

Meanwhile, somewhere along the line, there also enters the temptation to weave into what actually was a thread or two of what should have been. The French call it *l'esprit d'escalier*, "the wit of the staircase," the clever thing you ought to have said, which only comes to you on the stairs as you're leaving, rather than back at the party when it might have done some good.

When Judy Blunt's prize-winning memoir *Breaking Clean* appeared in 2002, nearly every reviewer praised its account of a childhood and marriage on the harsh Hi Line in northern Montana—and *every* reviewer mentioned the astonishing moment in which, as punishment for not having lunch ready for the farmhands, Blunt's father-in-law took her typewriter into the barn and battered it to pieces with a sledgehammer. As an image for the woes of an aspiring writer, the scene was hard to beat. Unfortunately, it also turned out to be made up: more proof of the iron law that when an anecdote is too perfect to be true, it isn't. The danger in all this—well, actually, storytelling has lots of dangers. There's something morally questionable about any activity that treats real human beings as pawns in a game whose goal is self-congratulation.

Meanwhile, there's the fact that every dishonesty weakens reality by one effect or another. In *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, George Bernard Shaw remarks that people who routinely lie suffer from more than merely having their friends and family cease to believe them. A habitual liar eventually comes to suppose that everyone else must be lying all the time, too, and human interaction turns ghostly and unreal.

The worst danger, however, may be when we stop remembering just how much an exaggeration is exaggerated. Stories can reach back to change the shape of memory, even while memory is providing the basis for those stories.

When I was very young, I was an escaper: a prison-breaker of toddlerdom, a Houdini of the stroller, a scaler of stairs, a mountaineer of the barriers with which parents try to cage their children. I remember it clearly. Or, at least, I remember later hearing stories about it—so many stories, and there was a photograph of me, as well, one or two years old, with one leg up on the rail of the playpen at my grandparents' house. It's not as though I have no genuine recollections of those days. I can still close my eyes and *see*, in undatable fragments of perfect memory, the towering look of my grandparents' book-

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shelves. The long, parallel channels carved down the curved legs of the chairs, seen from under the dining room table. The way the deep red in the borders of an oriental rug would blink, light to dark, dark to light, as I brushed the threads back and forth. But now I begin to doubt my vision of climbing from the playpen. I begin to suspect I have cobbled that would-be memory from listening to my father's stories of my childhood—illuminated by a photograph and the few surviving flashes of early recollection.

It could easily have been something worse. During the 1980s, a kind of madness seized pop psychology: Suddenly, nearly everyone seemed to be in therapy to recover "repressed memories." Is it significant that this was in the years that set the stage for the recent boom of unhappy childhood memoirs? A notion Sigmund Freud entertained briefly before abandoning it as damaging to his patients, the idea was somehow resurrected decades later in America to become a national obsession. Major universities, well-known teaching hospitals, and even the National Institutes of Mental Health joined the craze for bringing forgotten horrors to consciousness. By 1991 it was routinely claimed that half the patients in psychiatric care suffered repressed memories of abuse during childhood—a perfect circle in which the failure to recall abuse became proof that abuse had likely occurred.

"Repressed-Memory Syndrome" was only a brief episode in medical history, a classic instance of extraordinary popular delusion and the madness of crowds. But it had a certain plausibility—or, at least, the appearance of plausibility—for it was, in one sense, merely an extreme version of a fairly common psychological transaction: blaming on the past the failures of the present.

Nearly every family I know has an adult sibling or two whose lives are dominated by memories of their parents, all their stories and self-explanations looping back to some frightening or awkward moment of childhood. There is a disturbing quality about middle-aged people who still haven't quite taken responsibility for their world, and I often feel a kind of stern judgmentalism welling up in me while I listen to them. And yet, if there is a harsh judgment to be made here, I have to turn it on myself, for I do it, too, from time to time: chewing on the past, mulling my parents over and over, gnawing at childhood for an explanation of the way I live now. South Dakota: Ah, yes, that strange wind-blown world of South Dakota is the reason, or my eccentric relatives, or the endless cycle of divorces and remarriages that plagued my parents' generation. And why not? If we could shove back into the past the causes of all our present anxieties and discontents, we might find them finished: There's a reason we've been behaving in certain bad and self-destructive ways, but that reason belongs to a different time, and now we're free to move on.

Tom Wolfe

CORBIS / Roger Ressmeyer

And so each foray into childhood becomes a story, with all the usual temptations for shading the truth that storytelling offers—and with the great additional temptation to blame the poison of the present on poisoners from the past, constructing not just *a* story but *the* story, the overarching master tale that explains everything away. The key, especially in the modern run of memoirs, is that the past gets explained *away*—lost somehow, used up, even while it is being recounted.

"An autobiography can distort; facts can be realigned," V.S. Naipaul once wrote, in a last grand defense of the traditional novel. "But fiction never lies; it reveals the writer totally." If what we want is to make the past meaningful, then memoirs—in either their sentimental or their anti-sentimental form—are probably not the solution to the modern writer's peculiar situation.

Back in 1989, after the massive success of *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, Tom Wolfe took to the pages of *Harper's* with a "manifesto for the new social novel." In our "weak, pale, tabescent moment," he claimed, there's no one doing what Dickens and Balzac and Zola did. We have plenty of talented writers, but the "American novel is dying of anorexia" because writers won't go out and report on anything other than themselves. Looking around at the world of serious American literature, Wolfe saw a thousand authors all possessing a professional prose so finely honed it seemed capable of cutting to the heart of almost anything. And he couldn't understand why they wouldn't use it to carve up something important.

There have been some enjoyable childhood memoirs in recent years, of

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course. My own preference runs toward unpretentious Americana, like Homer Hickam's Coalwood memoirs, especially *Rocket Boys*, and Terry Ryan's *The Prize Winner of Defiance, Ohio: How My Mother Raised 10 Kids on 25 Words or Less*. But it was awfully hard not to climb on Frank McCourt's Irish bandwagon as *Angela's Ashes* rolled onto the *New York Times*'s best-seller list for 117 weeks. I don't trust David Sedaris when he insists, as he sometimes does, that his viciously funny stories are accurate autobiography, but nobody milks comic anecdotes better than he does in such books as *Holidays on Ice* and *Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim*.

Still, you understand the complaint about the perfect preciousness and self-absorption of America's high literary types. The sensitive set-pieces of childhood memoir are their natural form—rehearsing old wounds in faultless prose, like precocious children picking delicately at the scabs on their pale knees.

In fact, the modern memoir was born the day the writing teacher's slogan, "Write About What You Know," dandied itself up, bought some flowers, and went to call on Thoreau's defense of autobiography at the beginning of *Walden*: "I should not talk so much about myself if there were anybody else whom I knew as well. Unfortunately, I am confined to this theme by the narrowness of my experience. Moreover, I, on my side, require of every writer, first or last, a simple and sincere account of his own life, and not merely what he has heard of other men's lives." Thoreau may have been trying to make a joke, but after the run of recent memoirs, Tom Wolfe's protest seems more telling than ever: The last thing we need from writers is another simple and sincere account of their own lives; we'd love it if only they *would* go out to hear about people other than themselves.

And yet, Wolfe missed the extent to which a specific kind of prose creates its own uses, the extent to which a particular style requires a particular sensibility. The problem is that they write too well, our literary boys and girls. There's hardly a writer now alive whose schooled prose cannot paint in sharp detail almost anything you'd care to name: a catastrophic train wreck, the death of a giant redwood tree, the way the tone-arm on a 1960s hi-fi would quiver just before it settled on the spinning phonograph album. Without being witty, they know what humor looks like on a page; without being wise, they know what shape an insight has. They have a literary instrument ready to say almost anything. And they have almost nothing ready to say with it.

Our age, in other words, is an age of the literary academy, and it has all the virtues and all the vices Matthew Arnold promised when he urged English literature to build itself a counterpart to the Académie Française. Its virtues are a teachable consensus about what constitutes good writing, and a singleminded concentration on the art of it all. Its vices are harder to describe precisely: a certain *ennui* that infects all highly stylized human activities, a prose that takes the form of revelation more often than it actually reveals anything.

It's as though our authors have all been forced to absorb something as exquisite as, say, Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, a book of semi-mystical nature observation that's been mandatory at writers' workshops for years. And once an author's been annie-dillardized, the prose gets finer and finer, and the subject gets smaller and smaller. More, detail-studded prose is fun to write, and maybe even fun to read, in short bursts.

Every fall in Pierre, to mark the end of the summer's bare feet and sneakers, my mother would take us downtown to buy school shoes—those heavy, round-toed Buster Brown monsters that children used to wear: binding torture devices with slick tan soles that slippered across the shoe-store carpet and needed a week's scuffing on the curbs back and forth from school to make them walkable. By spring—snickered through piles of leaves, stamped in puddles, the winter's first thin frosts shattered with their heels, salted with the de-icing on the neighbors' snowy walks because the ugly black-rubber galoshes my mother wanted us to wear had been carefully forgotten at home—the shoes had faded from their original chocolate-linoleum brown to a kind of colorless gray, the tape aglets on the ends of the laces long disappeared, the broken laces themselves knotted together down the tongue of the shoe, the once-smooth brown toes roughened down to blotting paper.

But what advance is made by this sort of writing? The endless focus on details acts, in contemporary writing, mostly as artistic expansion: the writer's equivalent of what modern painters do when they blow up on large canvases the tiny brush strokes that classical painters once used to fill in corners of the background or the drape of a green velvet dress. A Victorian like Dickens would have thrown away all this kind of thing in a passing paragraph to describe a waiter he wouldn't even bother to name. Then he would have indulged a little facetiousness, described in telling detail a few of the other waiters, then drawn a large moral, and followed his story's hero out the inn's door, never to return.

Well, easy enough for Dickens. His prose is driven by the story he uses it to tell, and story is exactly what has become a problem for most high literature these days. Victorian novels dwell in a more complete world than ours, for they assume at least the possibility of what old-fashioned philosophers would have called the unity of truth.

One way to tell the literary history of the twentieth century is to follow the progression of an extremely bookish people who grew more and more uncertain, more and more diffident, more and more self-conscious, about the entire idea of telling a story or using the narrative finality of stories to convey such unified judgments about society, history, or even themselves. How could we do what the Victorians had done, when we were quickly losing confidence that the way a story works must reflect, in some measure, the way the world actually is?

The American memoirs from the middle of the twentieth century were still story-driven, or at least anecdote-driven: still confident enough in the completeness of the universe to assume that narrative is the motor on which books run. The newer memoirs are, instead, detail-driven. They have their

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own set of moral certainties, of course, but their prose always tends to convey events with the flood of particular circumstances rather than with moral-aiming storylines—using details like a great and inarticulate ocean, throwing wave after wave of sharply observed fact against the shore in the hope of washing out to sea the stranded meaning.

And why shouldn't we use this technique? Indeed, how could we use any other, these days? Details exist, in a way that stories don't, apart from moral judgment. They swim beneath the messy world of virtue and vice, down in the clear, clean waters of the purely physical, as though what confronts us in memory is not the assailant's pistol, but merely molecules of blue steel arranged by some chance in this particular way. Those details can be used to draw a picture in such a way that readers will make the expected moral judgments, of course. But the prose needn't make those judgments itself. And as for the rightness and wrongness of the things described in such detail, that's left a sort of epiphenomenon, a spume that plays above the facts—which is, perhaps, a perfect literary expression of the divisions the twentieth century suffered between the moral and the real.

I do not see clearly how to mend the rift between them. Writers were once people who imagined that a king's madness should call forth echoes in a disordered kingdom and a mad storm upon a heath, while their audiences were once people who believed that the stars themselves have a story to tell. They may all have been righter than we are today, with our demythologized details and our mistrust of sentimental stories. Poetic justice, the sense of an ending, a tale with a moral like the clicking shut of a well-made box: Perhaps we don't look for them in life because we found them in stories; perhaps we look for them in stories because we saw them first in life. Forget ambiguity. The entire universe wants a neat and happy conclusion. Creation is God's own cliffhanger, the *Perils of Pauline* in 600 billion installments, played across the stars.

And yet, the simple truth of autobiography is this: The accurate details of memory do not seem to come naturally packaged into stories. You have to take a hammer and beat them into shape, just a little. For that matter, our modern memoirists are describing lives that don't actually feel story-shaped, with some grand narrative marching from childhood's beginning to the moral of old age. And when these recent autobiographers try to force an overarching plot onto their childhoods, it always seems to turn odd and dark in their hands, just as the 1980s fascination with repressed memories was destined to do.

Bettmann / CORBIS

Charles Dickens

I remember once climbing a hill with my grandfather on a warm October afternoon, up into that endless South Dakota wind—although, in truth, the wind may have been gentler than I recall it. When you're five or six, and carrying a large paper kite against your chest like a lateen sail, a simple breeze feels like a giant's hand that wants to pick you up and fling you back to the bottom of the hill.

Still, the actual details of that day remain perfect in memory. The heart-sinking dip and the upturn's reprieve as the kite first found the wind. The burn of the twine as it raced between my thumb and the side of my fingers. The bright red diamond, crisscrossed with balsa sticks, against the pale blue sky, while the long knotted streamer spiraled below it. Then the slow, agonizing drift to the right I couldn't halt, and the tangle with the cord of my grandfather's own dark green diamond. Back and forth like a broken fan my kite whipped while my grandfather strained to bring them both down intact. But the string wouldn't hold. A hundred feet of loose tether fluttered gently down from the sky, and the red paper kite dwindled in the distance, sailing east across the empty plains.

Maybe I remember this now because it seems a figure for the loss of meaning in contemporary writing, broken free from the earth. Or maybe I recall it as a metaphor for what we lost when we were young, and why we need to revisit the past if we want to find some escape for the future. Or maybe it stands, finally, only as a small set of incidental facts—detailed but empty, dense in recollection but signifying nothing. I don't know. But until we decide what memory means, we will not grasp which of Epictetus' handles we must use to pick up the vase of the past. We will not be able to choose between the narratives of the old sentimental versions of family life, and the details of the new anti-sentimental accounts.

We will not have much of a way to write an American memoir, or tell the story of an American childhood. ♦

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... Friday, August 16, 1996 A23

The Washington Post

'My Fellow Republicans, As-Salaam-Alaikum'

Yesterday, August 15, 1996, Lamar Alexander accepted the Republican nomination for president. His five-hour acceptance speech was heavily influenced by Louis Farrakhan, whose address to last year's Million Man March has changed American political rhetoric forever. Here are excerpts from Alexander, Hour One:

LAMAR AL-X-ANDER

My fellow Republicans, *as-salaam-alaikum*. I am so grateful to Allah for giving me the chance to serve as your nominee for the presidency of the United States, and for helping me to break from the pack on Super Tuesday.

But I would like to address *all* Americans tonight. I stand before you in my black and red flannel bow tie, not as a normal politician, beholden to the ways of Washington, but as a messenger from God. Whether you like it or not, God brought His message of devolving telecom reform to the states through me. And I say unto my critics, if I am so bland, why is my message so exhilarating? If I am so dull, how is this platform so bright, the response so magnificent?

'The Number 18'

Thousands of you joined me on my march from Nashville, where most of my campaign donors live, to the convention center here in San Diego. And many of you noticed the tractor trailers that would pass us on the highway. And many asked, "Why are they called '18 wheelers'? What is so secret about the number 18?"

Let us probe this mystery. When you have an 8, you have two pregnant Koala bears stacked on top of one another. And when you have a 1 standing next to the 8, it means it is going to be an especially cold winter. Cold water freezes at 32 degrees, and if you add 3 and 2 to 18 you get 23 and if you subtract 13 to get rid of bad luck, you get 10, and what is 10 but the number of the amendment to the U.S. Constitution that explicitly reserves power to the states and not to the federal government?

'Petruvius "Willie" Lynch'

I am speaking to you tonight from a rostrum, which is a structure derived from ancient Rome—and as you know, the Roman Empire was not ruled from Washington but from Rome, which is just the kind of local control we need now. But in 212, a Roman slaveholder named Petruvius "Willie" Lynch, who once blocked hats at his local Masonic Lodge, wrote a pamphlet entitled the "Protocols of the Elders of K Street," in which he plotted to take power from virile, manly Romans and to amass it at the law firm of Patton, Boggs and Blow and among other bloodsuckers inside the Washington Beltway. And little by little it came to pass.

Now I have pledged to spend my presidency walking to global trade negotiations, and talking to normal folks along the way, while turning the White House into a Motel 6.

'Verily, Come On Along'

And this voyage will be no less magnificent than the walk Moses took in the Sinai when he sayeth to the Israelites, Come On Along! And was it not Jesus who said to his disciples, "Verily, Come On Along!" and Lo, they cameth on along!

And by this route, we will take power away from those in Washington and we will have a day of atonement, though we will make sure they, and not we, do most of the atoning. And we will embrace the governors—in Albany, in Sacramento, in Harrisburg—and we will instruct them about the 8 steps of Federalism, and especially step 5, which involves remitting a percentage of each block grant to the Empowerment Hair Care Company, owned by members of my campaign staff.

And so as I look out over this sea of mostly white faces, I say to you, bless you, you beautiful Republicans. And I know you won't mind listening to me for another four hours. And so let me begin the bulk of my remarks by comparing welfare reform to the notes on a piano . . .

the weekly Standard

September 19, 2005

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The [Washington] Post and Herblock are [illegible] Post is his forum, he helped create it. And [illegible] light. —*Katharine Graham on "[illegible]," Washington Post, Dec. 31, [illegible]*

Parody

the weekly Standard

September 19, 2005

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The Christmas "form letter" is making a comeback
—News item

GREATEST HITS

Parody

1997

9 Grosvenor Square, London W1

Yuletide 1997

Dear Intimate Friend (or current resident),

1997 was such a busy year it seems Marcy hardly got back in the door from accepting the 1996 Pulitzer for photojournalism when it was time to write again! It's been a year of many changes; with much regret for the many happy memories, we sold the houses in St. Tropez and Lake Tahoe and found a lovely oceanside cottage in Newport formerly owned by the Sultan of Brunei and Madonna. Harold of course is unbudgeable from the Park Avenue townhouse but Marcy spent most weekends in Lucerne. Harold retired this year (bought himself out) and received a gold-plated 1958 Cadillac Sedan de Ville from Marcy and a lovely marble paperweight from the regional sales managers. Touching, really. He sailed our 74-foot yawl Patrician to the villa in St. Kitt for some much-needed "R and R" with his "fishing buddy" Senator Christopher Dodd, pausing only to win the prestigious Montgomery Challenge Cup at the Cinqueports Regatta and to send Dad a "get well soon" card at the nursing home in Duluth.

Daughter Chloe was made senior partner of Ropes & Gray last spring while finishing her dissertation on Velasquez and helping Mom in the garden. She took time from her hang-gliding and glass-blowing (Grand Prize at the Leipziger Festival!) to vacation in Cap d'Antibes and Loch Skegg, where she re-designed the Pratt & Whitney fan-jet engine, wrote her third novel, and "met lots of new friends." In July she was named Archbishop of Canterbury (the first American to receive the honor--congrats, Chloe!) but turned it down in favor of the conductorship of the Vienna Philharmonic. Where DOES she find the time? She conceived a lovely child in October through frozen semen said to be donated by the Duke of York and if the sonogram bears this out and she finishes recording Parsifal for Deutsche Grammophon by the end of March she'll go through with the birth, even though it'll mean missing the Masters (she led all amateurs last year) and dropping her yoga.

Jeffrey--I'll always think of him as "Jeff" somehow, even though he is 24 years old--is living with AIDS in the 18ième arrondissement and producing a documentary on Algerian peasants in the time the Embassy spares him. He was infected by a charming Italian rear admiral with salt-and-pepper hair and family estates near San Gimignano that produce a scrumptious vin santo, which took the Medaille d'Or in Bruges for the third time running last summer. Two graduate students (one from Fribourg and one from the Ecole Superieure de Medicine) did their doctoral research on Jeffrey's lower intestine, and the June Lancet featured an electron micrograph cross-section of his villi! He flew his own Learjet to Monterey in April to host a party at the beach house and spent a week painting the deck and kitchen and writing the new constitution for Angola. Old friends Barbra Streisand and Caroline of Monaco stopped in to chat and he made new friends with a Brittany spaniel named Puffy.

Marcy was elected president of the American Medical Association, the Rockefeller Foundation, and Santa Barbara Garden Club this year, but as she says it takes most of her talent and energy "just being Mom"! She made new curtains and slip covers for the condo in Vail and her filly Just My Luck was named Thoroughbred of the Year by Bloodlines magazine. Between doing consulting for the IMF and serving as chair of the board of trustees of Princeton she fixed tasty meals for Harold and gave a harpsichord recital. One sad note is that our Siamese tom Huang-Tzu of Royal Xanadu II bit our Taiwanese handyman Ho and he had to be put down--Ho, that is.

We hope you all had a comparably fulfilling 1997. There's so much more to tell but, as Harold said, "I doubt many of them can read anyway."

Love you bunches!

Harold & Marcy

the weekly standard

SEPTEMBER 19, 2005

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As a child of the Depression, Morrison jokes, 'I have bad dreams about eviction.' So she maintains three residences. At right, her triplex apartment in Manhattan.

—photo caption in* Time *magazine's cover story on novelist Toni Morrison, January 19, 1998

Song of Salomon Brothers

So badly the IPO had turned out. The debentures debased, the stock issues that stiffened and then softened and then fell. Toni M balanced the telephone receiver in her hand, felt its weight and lightness like snow. And listened with her heart.

"Ain no man wanna shift his assets into tech stocks right now, Miss Toni," her broker said. "Wid a 61 percent discount on current valuations, da pharmaceutical sector jes too 'ttractive for a man to bear."

"So what do we do now?" she asked.

"Well, for starters, I'd like to stop talking like a character from one of your books."

"Fine."

"I mean, I'm a Harvard MBA."

"That's fine."

"Okay," the broker muttered. "Now, the Nobel Prize money's gone. We need to work on a new investment strategy."

She sighed and returned it to its cradle, an infant so silent, without strength to cry, so mute now. The receiver, I mean.

From the wellspring of her soul the long-ago memories stirred: she a shivery young girl, narrow-shouldered, gingham-dressed, and the landlord's broad hand holding the crumpled paper, stamped with a white man's notary seal, stained with his masculine manhood musk. Eviction. Is this again eviction? She turned and began to walk through the living room of her triplex. Within minutes she had made it halfway across the room. Maybe not eviction; this was a condo; the condo was paid for; in cash, actually; but she might, now, have to forgo maybe the cabana she was building around the pool at the farm upstate.

In the foyer of her apartment, the superintendent's daughter squatted, having a baby. Blood, partutem, afterbirth on the marble.

Toni M thought of her portfolio. The white man at Salomon had assured her she was sufficiently diversified—tax-free munis, sector-specific mutual funds, and plenty of liquidity. She looked at the marble floor of her foyer. Liquidity was clearly the problem. And real estate was the solution.

Toni M called the doorman downstairs. She didn't trust him. The color of licorice; midnight skin. She had seen him beat young girls, many young girls, by the lamplight while the hawks circled overhead, symbolizing freedom or something.

"Yes, Miss Toni," the doorman answered, pounding his head violently against the mahogany paneling.

"Charles, have my car brought around."

"Where you off to?" he said, spitting blood, sputum. Teeth.

"To the realtors," she said, pleased. "This woman is in a mood to buy."

the weekly Standard
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Hillary Clinton implies that her husband's philandering ways may have grown out of the tensions he faced as a boy as a result of vicious feuding between his mother and grandmother.
—News item

The Man from Hot Springs

by Tennessee Williams

Scene 1

Setting: A shabby split-level house in Hot Springs, Arkansas. The furniture is ripped and dirty. The floor is strewn with whiskey jugs and old pizza boxes.

(Billy-Boy enters wearing an Elvis wig and carrying a banjo.)

Billy-Boy: Maw . . . the delivery man is here with the roast squirrel pizza pie you ordered.

(Maw appears at the top of the stairs, stage right.)

Maw: Thanks, Billy-Boy. You send him on up, and don't bother us for half an hour.

(Grandma enters, stage left.)

Grandma: Ginny-Jo, you have got to stop fooling around with every pizza man who comes by.

Maw *(wagging finger)*: Now you listen to me! I want to make this clear. I did not fool around with that last delivery man, Mr. Jefferson!

Grandma: You an unusually good liar, Ginny-Jo!

Maw: Billy, if someone is ever nice enough to bring you a pizza someday, I hope you will show some consideration in return.

Billy-Boy: Yes, Maw.

Grandma: Don't you listen to her, Billy. What you need to do is marry one of those ambitious girls from up north, the kind that would run over your poor dead grandmother if it would help her get ahead. Promise me you'll marry a girl like that.

Billy-Boy: Sure, Grams.

Maw: Personally, I have always relied on the kindness of strangers . . . them and State Troopers of course.

Grandma *(whispering)*: Say it, Billy. Say our phrase.

Billy-Boy: Aw, Grams, I don't feel like it.

Grandma: Say it, Billy. I want you to always be saying it. Say it now.

Billy-Boy *(mumbling)*: We'll just have to win, then.

Grandma: Say it louder Billy. I can't hear you. Say it louder!

Billy-Boy *(shouting)*: We'll just have to win, then!

Grandma: Hallelujah!

(Curtain)

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Al Gore and Tipper in the late 1960s, in photos published on the front page of the June 21, 2000, New York Times.

WHAT HE WAS THINKING

"Nobody understands the secret torments of the Big Man on Campus. Sure, I'm athletic, rich, and smart. And God knows I'm studly. But I can't take part in the smiling frivolity of youth the way Tipper can. I see too deeply. I perceive too much. Sometimes I think Hermann Hesse novels are my only friends. Hmm. If Tipper were to keel over right now, that would make a fantastic personal growth anecdote for a convention speech someday."

"Still, I must learn to loosen up. I must try to appear as if I function at their level, for the sake of my political viability. There, I'm smiling. I think I'm smiling. I'm doing the best I can. I wish Tipper would move her head. She's obscuring my rugged jawline."

"Fortunately, the chicks dig me just the way I am. I shall graciously allow Tipper to nuzzle my neck. I hope she's not going to leave a mark—though a small mark might humanize me . . .
I hope I don't doze off again. She hates that."

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San Francisco Chronicle *executive editor Phil Bronstein was attacked* by a Komodo dragon after he entered the giant lizard's cage during a private tour of the Los Angeles Zoo arranged by his wife, actress Sharon Stone. —*News item*

Giant Lizard Recovering from Celebrity Run-in

LOS ANGELES—A Komodo dragon was listed in stable condition following a "harrowing" encounter with celebrity newspaper editor Philip Bronstein, a hospital spokesman said last night.

"He's lucky to be alive," a Cedars-Sinai Hospital spokesman told a packed press briefing. "And he's clearly grossed out. But he is one tough lizard."

The incident between the lizard and celebrity editor Bronstein, more widely known as "Mr. Sharon Stone" since his marriage to the movie sex queen, occurred early yesterday morning at the Los Angeles zoo.

According to eyewitnesses, the ten-foot-long Indonesian lizard was dozing in his cage, "minding his own business," when the celebrity editor entered the cage with Stone and a zoo curator. The two celebrities were on a special VIP tour of zoo facilities early Saturday morning.

"The poor thing took one look at Stone and just freaked," one source said. "Have you ever seen Sharon Stone at seven o'clock in the morning? You'd freak, too."

What happened next is unclear, according to knowledgeable sources, but somehow the lizard's mouth suddenly became filled with Bronstein's foot. The lizard responded by thrashing its body back and forth in an apparent attempt to free himself from the celebrity editor.

"It was disgusting," said the source. "I just thought, 'Oh my god.' A guy like Bronstein—you don't know where he's been, what he's stepped in." Zoo officials were able to distract Bronstein long enough for the lizard to get away. "If that thing had stayed in his mouth ten seconds longer, this zoo would be minus one Komodo dragon," said a zoo official.

Emergency medical technicians arrived immediately, sources said, and had to step over Bronstein to administer assistance to the lizard, who was transported to Cedars-Sinai Hospital by medi-vac helicopter.

The hospital has been deluged with telephone calls and e-mails expressing sympathy for the five-year-old lizard, who was resting comfortably last night, according to a Cedars-Sinai spokesman. "What he's been through, no humane person could wish that on anybody," said the spokesman. "Now he just needs a little time and space for healing."

Bronstein could not be reached for comment.

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Parody

The New York Times

Washington Final

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2002

ONE DOLLAR

GOP WINS SENATE; NATION GIRDS FOR BUSH JUDGES, END OF CIVILIZATION

Doomed to Repeat It

Ideological conservatives gather for a Ku Klux Klan initiation rally in the late 1920s. Their grandchildren now form the Republican Party's activist base. Coverage of GOP intolerance, Page A18.

Turnout Heavy in Key States Among Christian Rightists, Public School Graduates

Experts Surprised at Voters' Stupidity, Selfishness

By ZBIEGTEIM ASCHOAL

Defying well-established historical trends, the expectations of most political professionals, and the requirements of simple decency, voters in yesterday's mid-term elections gave the Republican Party at least 50 seats in the Senate. With Vice President Dick Cheney available to break any legislative tie in his party's favor, yesterday's results mean that Trent Lott of Mississippi, where once it was legal to hold black men in chattel slavery (see related stories on Page A18), is once again the Senate's majority leader.

Mr. Lott will no doubt begin planning an agenda for the new Senate forcing women into back-alley abortions is high on his list, some say almost immediately.

Republicans also appear to have retained control of the House of Representatives, a result that was more predictable, though no less repellent and disappointing to Americans with mainstream views and generous spirits.

The final outcome of Minnesota's Senate race had not yet been announced early this morning. That contest pitted former St. Paul mayor and Democrat-turned-Republican turncoat Norm Coleman against the distinguished and much-beloved former Vice President Walter Mondale. Mondale was a late-campaign ballot substitution for the distinguished and much-beloved incumbent Senator Paul Wellstone, who recently died in an unspeakably tragic plane crash.

Also unresolved this morning is Louisiana, where the incumbent Democrat Mary Landrieu was running against a number of Republican challengers who, some say, aren't really worth mentioning by name. Ms. Landrieu has surely finished first in Louisiana. But under that state's rules, if she hasn't won a full 50 percent of the vote, she will be forced into a second, runoff election, which is a risk that Louisianans with mainstream views and generous spirits would prefer to avoid.

At the White House, there is undisguised glee. That smirking bas-

Continued on Page A14

DOJ Silent on Detention of Streisand

By FRIDA MEEROPOL

LOS ANGELES, Nov. 5 — James Brolin says he's heard nothing from his wife, singer-actress Barbra Streisand, since the morning of Oct. 29, when two men who identified themselves as agents of the FBI's Los Angeles field office interviewed her at the couple's Malibu estate. "She's clearly in federal custody," Mr. Brolin insists. But Justice Department officials in Washington are refusing all comment on Ms. Streisand's whereabouts.

Rights groups have long worried that the FBI might misuse its new domestic anti-terrorism powers against relatively minor threats to national security like poor spelling.

Times to Distribute Arts & Leisure Section Free to Needy

By SUSAN CREAMCHEESE

Beginning with its Nov. 10 edition, the New York Times will distribute each Sunday paper's "Arts & Leisure" section free of charge to economically and culturally disadvantaged families. Times publisher Arthur Sulzberger Jr. announced the new charity yesterday afternoon, at a tastefully understated press conference in mid-town Manhattan.

The program's ultimate scope remains uncertain because qualifications standards have yet to be finalized, Mr. Sulzberger acknowledged. "How you define disadvantage is a difficult problem," he said. "But certain criteria are obvious and we're eager to get started."

At the urging of Times executive editor Howell Raines, registered Republicans in the city's five bor-

69 percent of them could not pronounce architecture critic Herbert Muschamp's name, and another 17 percent simply laughed when they were asked to try. Its sponsors call the results anomalous, and the study has since been abandoned.

But researchers from Columbia University have conducted a telephone survey of more than 400 ordinary people nationwide, whose responses have been compared to those obtained from a control group of Times subscribers at a truly delightful East Side dinner party.

Respondents were read a recent story by Alan Riding about the Ballet Biarritz in Perpignan, France, and they were then asked if they found the piece the slightest bit interesting. Though many hung up

Some Win, Some Lose

Long Before the Polls Close, An Excellent Cognac Puts Things in Perspective

By R. W. APPLE Jr.

News Analysis

The television pundits will have kept their frozen smiles in place and on the air until the wee hours of the morning. And even the most sophisticated print reporter may be tempted, momentarily, to work past his usual afternoon deadline. But all elections

Lott or Mr. Daschle, good-naturedly arguing that it did, too, matter whether Republicans or Democrats controlled the Senate. But he admitted that little had changed at the restaurant for more than 20 years, during which the Senate has switched hands four times already.

My friend Pierre's 1946 Maison

the weekly Standard

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GREATEST HITS

Parody

AUGUST 2005

Living

Joe McCarthy Christmas Cookies

How to Signal When It's Over: Castration

Contempt Is Sexy!

Ann's Custom-Made Flame-Proof Lip Gloss

The Verdict on Kittens: Filthy, Rotten, Lying Scum

Home Improvement: Bob Barr Redoes His Gun Room

Inspiring Stories of Intimidation and Humiliation

PLUS: Excerpts from Ann's Books—Slander, Treason, Betrayal, Cowardice, Murder, Obesity, and her latest, Tardiness

the weekly Standard

September 19, 2005

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Parody

VOWS

Kelly Rabinowicz and Armand Chandrasekar

By TIFFANI SELZBURG

When Kelly Rabinowicz and Armand Chandrasekar first spotted each other on pack mules outside the famous copper mine in Telluride, Colo., where each had gone separately and quite alone on vacation, Ms. Rabinowicz, 24, never guessed that, three months later, they would be together on pack mules once again, only this time reciting marriage vows they themselves wrote before Rabbi Mary Francis Doyle at Temple Israel ben Nurishkeit of Lincolnwood, Ill.

"When Armand first asked me out," Ms. Rabinowicz said, "I was frankly hesitant. I mean, here was this recently defrocked Trappist monk, and I have been sexually active from a fairly early age." Muffin Ginsburg, Ms. Rabinowicz's maid of honor and former roommate at Rollins College in Florida, chuckled and said, "Sexually active! In the sorority house at Rollins, the standing joke was, could Kelly get a pair of Manolo Blahniks with round heels?"

Originally from Calcutta, Mr. Chandrasekar, 34, none of whose family was able to attend the wedding, comes from a long line of untouchables on his father's side. His mother's great aunt was Eva Braun, Adolf Hitler's mistress.

"I have to admit that at first the Hitler thing was a bit disturbing," said Dr. Morris Rabinowicz, who gave away his daughter from atop a grey pack mule named Siggy. "Kelly's mother and I were very wary, but we brought her up to be her own person and decided not to stand in the way." From her mule, a palomino named Seth, Kelly's mother, Dr. Stacey Rabinowicz, agreed, smiling. "Always unpredictable, our Kelly." The Rabinowiczes are in partnership as veterinary oral surgeons in Skokie, Ill.

As if there weren't complications enough between the couple, Mr. Chandrasekar is a strict vegan, who will eat nothing that has originally had either eyes or roots. Ms. Rabinowicz likes nothing better than, as she put it, "to tear into a three-inch thick veal chop." Summers during her college years, she worked as a hostess at Myron and Phil's Steakhouse in Lincolnwood. "You could practically die from the secondary cholesterol in the place," she said. "Still, it was a fun job."

LINCOLNWOOD, IL, SEPT. 23 Kelly and her bridesmaids guide their mounts to the ceremony.

Well aware of Mr. Chandrasekar's dietary restrictions, the night of the day they met, Ms. Rabinowicz brought a blender to his room, along with a five-pound box of chocolate truffles and a large bag of Clementine oranges, and made him an orange-truffle puree. "It was highly scrumptious, let me assure you," said Mr. Chandrasekar, in his clipped Calcuttan accent. "And so was he," added Ms. Rabinowicz with a smile. "I'd never slept with an untouchable before."

The impressive differences between the bride and bridegroom were noted by many guests at the wedding service. "They're not sufficiently alike to be considered opposites," said Dr. Rabinowicz, the bride's mother. "Kelly has always been sexually active," said Megan Schwartz, a bridesmaid who knows Ms. Rabinowicz from high school days. "And Armand has spent the better part of the last ten years in his cell in the monastery. With the need to make up for lost time, I think they'll get along just fine."

Mr. Chandrasekar, who has been working as a consultant for McKinsey & Co. since leaving the monastery, focuses on assisting start-up firms specializing in low technology agribusiness. Ms. Rabinowicz, who intends to keep her maiden name professionally, is a dental technician, currently unemployed.

The bride's friends look forward to fascinating conversations and many interesting meals at the home of the newly married couple once they return from Madagascar, where Mr. Chandrasekar keeps a summer home.

"They'll get along splendidly," noted Deidre Shapiro, a friend who knows Ms. Rabinowicz from preschool. "Kelly was always, you know, sexually very active." Dr. Rabinowicz, the bride's father, otherwise seeming very pleased with the proceedings, looked a bit puzzled and remarked that this was the first he had heard of all this sexual activity.

The mules, rented from Thernstrum Stables in nearby Morton Grove, Ill., remained calm and well-behaved throughout the ceremony.

the weekly Standard
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Light, c Doina

Kate Dwyer, Vic Matus

Catherine Canaga, Nick Swezey

Percy and Blythe Dwyer of Upper Lipp, Conn., are dismayed to announce the marriage of their daughter, Kathleen Wascha Dwyer, to

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Parody

Mr. Roosevelt's effective seizure of the Isthmus last year was commendable, and we heartily welcome the infant Republic of Panama into the community of nations. But a nation intent on realizing its Manifest Destiny can hardly be content with a mere abbreviation of trade routes. A great republic is held together not by the threads of commerce alone, but by the common bonds of heritage, nationality, and geographical proximity. Accordingly, while work may proceed apace in Panama, the Chief Executive would do well to contemplate another, and yet more daunting, challenge to the engineering profession: a bridge to connect the continental United States with the newly annexed Hawaiian Islands. 'National Greatness' cannot be a mere phrase; it must be a living doctrine, alive in the bosom of every citizen, borne in the manifold works of our country, and without which this great experiment in self-government will surely die.

Ago
RD

For too long the Government at Washington has tolerated the insolence and presumption of the Barbary States, with their unceasing demands for monetary Tribute, and craven Submission to all manner of Oriental despotism. Now, having taken the measure of the unspeakable Pasha of Tripoli, Yusuf Karamanli by name, Providence has afforded Mr. Jefferson a glimpse of victory at the gates of the tyrant's opulent quarters, and a vision of the Mediterranean Sea devoid of Barbary privateers and sundry renegades. To wit: If the American consul at Tunis, the Honorable William Eaton, may be fortified with a detachment of United States Marines, and some two or three capital ships, and various Allies in kind who likewise languish at the heel of the Ottoman boot, then brevet General Eaton may march eastward thenceforth to seize the port city of Derna, and commission our trusted Hamet Karamanli to usurp his brother Yusuf forthwith, and restore the Tripolitan throne to its rightful Occupant, while commending Democracy within and throughout these alien precincts.

Years Ago in The Weekly Standard (V A.D.)

AN EMPIRE THAT DELIBERATELY DRAWS ITS BORDER AT THE EDGE OF THE PRIMEVAL WOOD IN GERMANIA WILL NOT LONG SURVIVE, EITHER AS AN EMPIRE, OR AS A QUAVERING NATION-STATE. WE DO NOT PROFESS TO KNOW WHAT ARMINIUS, THE FUR-CLAD TRIBAL CHIEFTAIN WHO INHABITS THE INNER SANCTUM OF THE TEUTOBURG FOREST, HAS IN MIND WHEN HE HARRIES THE EMPEROR'S LEGIONS FOR AMUSEMENT. BUT IT DOES ROME NO GOOD, AND WILL CAUSE CAESAR AUGUSTUS NO END OF DISMAY. TO ADDRESS THIS CHALLENGE WITH COMPLACENCY. WE LIVE IN EXTRAORDINARY TIMES. AS THE EX-SLAVE FLATULUS FREEDMAN HAS WRITTEN, THE WORLD IS FLAT, AND WE MAY NOT KNOW IF THE ROBE WE WEAR IS MADE OF LINEN FROM PHILISTIA, OR IF THE TILE WE WALK UPON WAS FIRED IN GAUL. BUT WE DO KNOW THAT THE UNITY OF THE EMPIRE THAT HAS BROUGHT US THIS HISTORIC WEALTH MUST BE SUSTAINED THROUGH STRENGTH, NOT WEAKNESS. YES, THERE IS A CERTAIN ROMANCE ABOUT THE BARBARIANS, WHICH HAS BEGUILED OUR DIPLOMATS AND EMISSARIES IN ROME. BUT THEY MUST NOT BE APPEASED. UNLESS ARMINIUS IS RECOGNIZED FOR THE THREAT THAT HE IS, OR THE PERIL HE WILL SURELY BECOME IF ALLOWED TO PROSPER, WE MAY LIVE TO SEE ROME OVERRUN BY SUCCESSIVE WAVES OF GOTHS, NOT TO MENTION OSTROGOTHS AND VISIGOTHS, AND IT WILL BE TOO LATE TO AWAKEN AND DRAW A LINE IN THE SAND.

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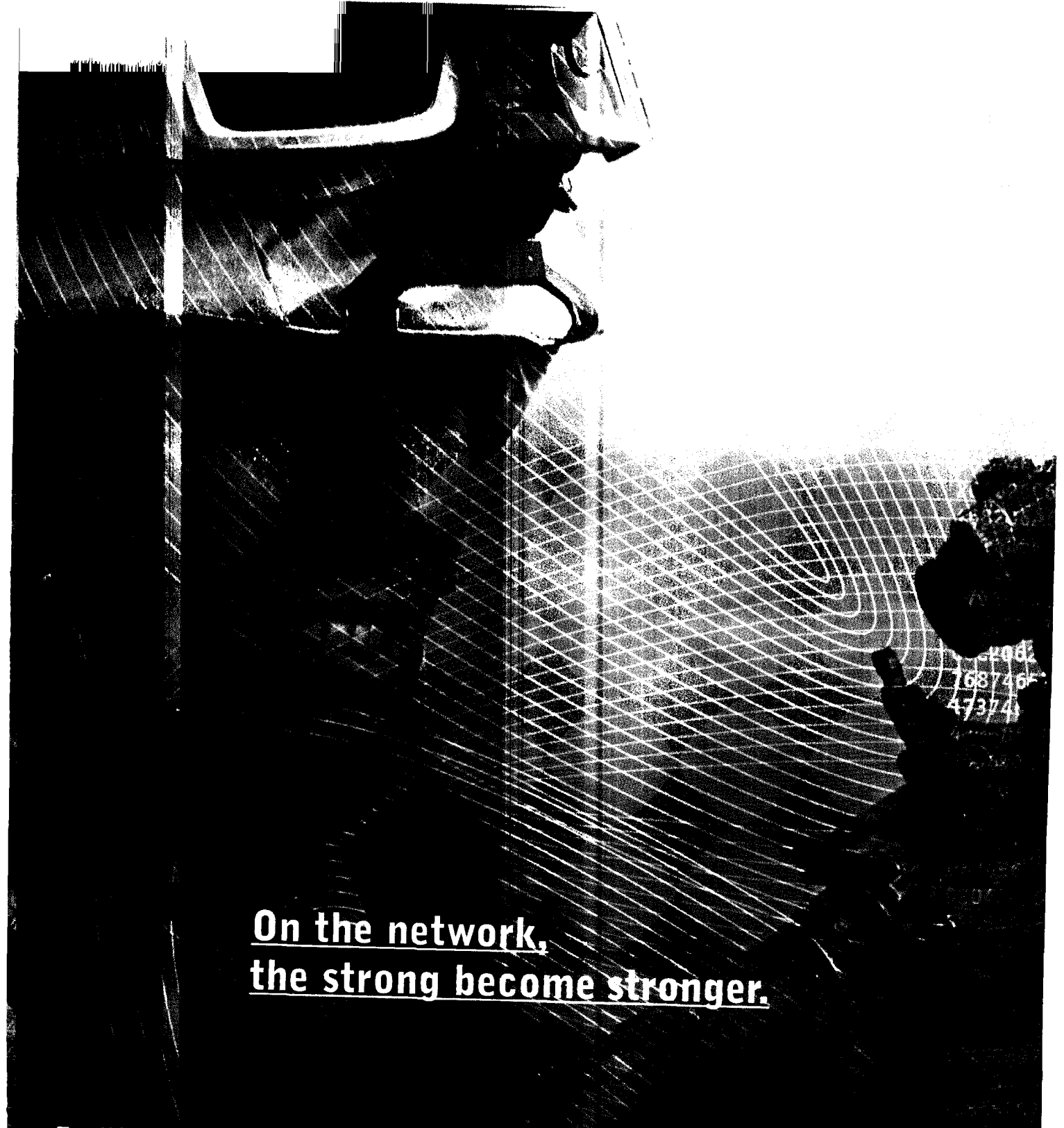

On the network, the strong become stronger.

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I'm one in a million. Everyday nearly 1,000,000 Americans earn their living helping GM build and sell cars in the United States. I'm one of them. My name is Blake Wilson and I'm a body shop welder at the Corvette plant in Bowling Green, Kentucky. To me and my family, it's the most important job in America.

Blake Wilson

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